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'Edmund Burke
Religion and Eighteenth-Century Modernity'

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Kelleen O'Connell

Thesis Submitted for Examination: PhD

King's College London

August, 2013

'Edmund Burke: Religion and Eighteenth-Century Modernity'

Thesis Abstract

This thesis fills the need for a comprehensive study of Edmund Burke's representation of global religions throughout the general *oeuvre* of his writings and speeches. My objective is to advance the study of Burke by offering a critical account of his religious thought, as a critical imprint in his literature. In addition to situating Burke's writing in the context of Enlightenment thought and eighteenth-century public life, I make a further contribution to the study of Burke's literature by demonstrating how twentieth and twenty-first century theories of modernity can help to articulate Burke's conception of religion.

Studies that have categorically seated Burke in the context of 'modernity' (for example, from Terry Eagleton, Paddy Bullard, and Stephen K. White) treat him as a 'politician', as 'Edmund Burke the rhetorician', or 'as an aesthetician'.[1] My thesis compliments these studies by filling the need to treat Burke as a multicultural quasi-religious thinker in the context of modernity.

Studies that have treated Burke in a religious context (for example, from Conor Cruise O'Brien, Thomas H.D. Mahoney, Eamonn O'Flaherty, Elizabeth Lambert, J.C.D. Clark, Brian Young, Frederick Dryer, and others) have done so with the objective of understanding more about his personal religious convictions.[2] Differing from such studies, I do not intend to unearth

[1] The parameters and characteristics of the term 'modernity' are defined later in the introduction to this thesis; Stephen K. White, *Edmund Burke: Modernity, Politics, and Aesthetics*, (Maryland: USA, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1994), p. 2; Paddy Bullard, *Edmund Burke and the Art of Rhetoric*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 2; Terry Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), p. 58.

[2] Conor Cruise O'Brien, *The Great Melody: A Thematic Biography and Commented Anthology of Edmund Burke*, (London: Sinclair Stevenson, 1992); Thomas H.D. Mahoney, *Edmund Burke and Ireland*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960); Eamonn O'Flaherty, 'Burke and the Catholic Question', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland / Iris an dá chultúr*, 12, (1997), 7–27; Elizabeth Lambert, 'Edmund Burke's Religion', *English Language Notes*, 32 (1994), 19–28; J.C.D. Clark, 'Religious Affiliation and Dynastic Allegiance in Eighteenth-Century England: Edmund Burke, Thomas Paine and Samuel Johnson', *English Literary History*, 64 (1997), 1029–67; Brian Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England: Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); also F.P. Lock, 'Burke and Religion', in *An Imaginative Whig: Reassessing the Life and Thought of Edmund Burke*, (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2005), ed. by Ian Crowe, pp. 35–58; and Ian

Burke's true religious identity; rather, I intend to fill the need for a full-length study of Burke's analysis of religion, as it appears in a literary context. There exists no monographic study of Burke's conceptualization of global religions as translated through recent theories of modernity. This is the task set forth in this thesis.

Most of the studies that acknowledge Burke in a religious context treat him in strictly Christ-centred terms, mostly to support reactionary-conservative interpretations (e.g., Francis Canavan, Bruce Frohnen, and Christopher Hitchens).[3] I wish to examine political thinking about religion, beyond Christ-centred terms - his global conception of non-Christian, non-god-centred thinking. In doing so, this thesis is intended to present an interpretation of Burke that acknowledges the importance he placed on indigenous religious culture. To my mind, interpretations of Burke that emphasise his reactionary-conservatism also implicate him as being anti-modern. As I intend to explore Burke's writings and speeches in the context of modernity, I believe it is only responsible to acknowledge these interpretations of him as a reactionary-conservative.

I use the work of J.G.A. Pocock, S.J. Barnett, Bruno Latour and others to establish a context of eighteenth-century modernity, or what was modern to Enlightenment minds.[4] In addition, my critical analysis of Burke demonstrates how the same characteristics and themes associated with this eighteenth-century context of modernity are reflected in representations of

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Crowe, *Patriotism and Public Spirit: Edmund Burke and the Role of the Critic in Mid-18th Century Britain*, (Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2012).

[3] Francis Canavan, 'Edmund Burke: Christian Statesman', *Reflections*, 1, (2003), [accessed 28 January 2009], (para. 1 of 13); Bruce Frohnen, *Virtue and the Promise of Conservatism The Legacy of Burke and Tocqueville*, (Kansas, USA: University Press of Kansas, 1993); Christopher Hitchens, 'Reactionary Prophet', *The Atlantic Monthly*, 3 (2004), 133–38, (p. 133).

[4] J.G.A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, 5 vols, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999–2001), II, *Narratives of Civil Government*, V, *Religion: the First Triumph*; S.J. Barnett, *The Enlightenment and Religion: the Myths of Modernity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003); Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. by Catherine Porter, (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993).

modernity that are more recent. I use twentieth and twenty-first century theories of modernity to enrich our understanding of Burke's representation of religion. I deconstruct Burke's representation of religion to suggest that it anticipates the various complexities communicated in studies of modernity (for example, from Zygmunt Bauman, Marshall Berman, and Paul Heelas, Phillip Blond, John Milbank, Jacques Derrida, and Michel Foucault).[5] Ultimately, my thesis validates Burke as an originator of modern (and contemporary) religious conceptualization, which transcends things such as nation, sect, and even good and evil.

[5] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000); Marshall Berman, *All that is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience Of Modernity*, (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1982); Paul Heelas, *Religion, Modernity, and Postmodernity*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998); Phillip Blond, 'The Primacy of Theology and the Question of Perception', *Ibid*., pp. 285–313; John Milbank, 'Sublimity: the Modern Transcendent', in *Ibid.*, pp. 258–84; Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, ed. by John D. Caputo, (USA: Fordham University Press, 1997); Michel Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 81; also Michel Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, ed. by Jeremy R. Carrette, (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 1999).

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Burke scholarship and the contribution of my thesis

This thesis concerns Edmund Burke's representation of religion as it is affected by eighteenth-century modernization. My study fills the need for a full-length enquiry into Burke's religious thought, in general. There exists no comprehensive study of Burke's conceptualization of eighteenth-century global religions as reflected in the concept of modernity. I intend to advance our understanding of Burke's writings and speeches by offering this critical account of how Burke's religious thought is represented in a wide range of his texts, reaching beyond questions surrounding his own religious identity. I situate my analysis of Burke's religious conceptualization in the historical context of the eighteenth century. However, I further demonstrate how twentieth and twenty-first century theories of modernity can articulate the way religion is represented in Burke's writings.

Few recent contributions to Burke scholarship have avowedly seated his thought in the context of modernity (a term defined at length later in this introduction); those who do (e.g., Terry Eagleton, Paddy Bullard, and Stephen K. White) expertly examine the continuity between Burke's politics and his aesthetic thought—not his global conceptualization of religious culture. This thesis is intended to fill that void. Further, some of these studies (e.g., Eagleton and White) perpetuate a reactionary-conservative interpretation of Burke. While these interpretations are respectively valid, my thesis is an effort to evince a counter-interpretation of Burke as progressive through the lens of his religious thought. It is important to note here that Burke was not a religious theorist; Frederick Dryer explains:

> He [Burke] was not a high churchman in the seventeenth or the nineteenth-century sense of the word. Indeed, he was not a high churchman in any useful sense of the word. What he was in fact was a latitudinarian. His tradition of churchmanship was broad and low. Like other latitudinarians he was tolerant and open-minded in matters of dogmatic orthodoxy; he regarded matters of liturgical practice as questions of convenience and expediency. […] He looked upon all churches as merely human associations, administering a purely human jurisdiction.[6]

While I will later discuss the complications of the latitudinarian label that Dryer affixes to Burke above, I wish to draw from Dryer's passage here to illustrate that (although he was not a member of the clergy in the Anglican Church, a 'high churchman') the high volume of Burke's thoughts on dogmatic orthodoxy, liturgical practice, and religious cultural identity found in his writings allows us to conceive of him as a religious thinker 'in effect' or 'as it were'—a *quasi*-religious thinker.[7]

Even fewer studies interpret Burke's writing through the lens of his religious thought and how it figures with modernity as a concept. Studies that do ponder Burke and religion (like Dryer's, quoted above) tend to focus only on unearthing his real religious identity, the questions about Catholicism surrounding Burke, and his writings concerning Ireland. Conor Cruise O'Brien, Christopher Hitchens, Thomas H.D. Mahoney, Eamonn O'Flaherty, and Frederick Dreyer all speculate heavily on Burke's personal religious

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[6] Frederick Dryer, 'Burke's Religion', *Studies in Burke and His Time*, 17 (1976), 199–212, (p. 201).
[7] 'Originally applied in the seventeenth and early eighteenth century to those who, holding a *de jure* Episcopacy, opposed a comprehension or toleration of differences in church polity, and demanded the strict enforcement of the laws against Dissenters, and the passing of such additional measures as the Occasional Conformity Bill', High Churchman; 'classical Latin *quasi* as if, as it were, almost, practically', circa fifteenth century, Oxford English Dictionary, 'quasi', <http://www.oed.com/>, [May 1st, 2013].

conviction, and the potential influence of his Catholic connections: Hitchens follows O'Brien's argument that Burke was near enough to 'being a crypto-Catholic'; he too maintains that Burke was 'probably a Catholic […]'.[8] Brian Young also honours the work of O'Brien:

> The religion of Burke is indeed notoriously difficult to decipher, but Conor Cruise O'Brien is surely right to see in his notion of the Church something which absorbed both the Roman Catholicism which pervaded his upbringing and the Anglicanism which was a necessary part of his identity as a prominent politician in England.[9]

Other scholars argue against this interpretation; J.C.D. Clark relocates the religious identities of Burke as paired with Samuel Johnson, in a study that suggests: '[…] if [Samuel] Johnson has been wrongly identified as a proto-Evangelical, Burke has equally been misplaced as a crypto-Catholic'.[10] Clark, along with Dryer and Elizabeth Lambert, asserts 'Burke's Protestant Latitudinarianism'.[11] While my thesis is an effort to engage with these (and more) valuable studies about Burke, the point I make here is that such speculation concerning Burke's true religious identity is beyond the scope of this study. Such biographical enterprises, to my mind, risk fallacious appeals to probability. Rather, it is my objective to fill the need to understand Burke's religious thought as a critical impression in the wide range of his literature.

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[8] O'Brien, *Melody*, p. 44; Hitchens, p. 133.
[9] Young, p. 71.
[10] Clark, 'Religious Affiliation', p. 1029.
[11] Clark, 'Religious Affiliation', p. 1037; Dryer, 'Burke's Religion', p. 199, 201; Lambert, 'Edmund Burke's Religion', p. 20.

The need to understand Burke's religious thought (beyond his own convictions, beyond the Catholic question) is an enterprise only recently gaining greater attention. Perhaps the timeliness of my thesis is evinced in both Richard Bourke's and Ian Harris' contribution in the very recent *Cambridge Companion to Burke*.[12] Portions of my thesis thematically resonate with portions of Bourke's contribution, which mentions Burke's trepidation over the 'deistical Enlightenment' as ushered in by Henry St. John the Viscount Bolingbroke and John Toland; Bourke writes of the onset of new scientific progress 'at a cost of annihilating the legitimating principles of religion and society altogether'.[13] I view my thesis as complementing Bourke's enterprise by observing a rhetorical practice in Burke's writing: protecting religious establishment by relying on themes antithetical to the legitimating principles of religion. For example, Bourke suggests that *The Moralists*, by Anthony Ashley-Cooper third earl of Shaftesbury, engages with 'an unorthodox agenda readily associated with deism'.[14] This observation resonates with an argument I make in Chapter 1, about Burke engaging with characteristics associated with deism and non-God-centred themes.[15] Ian Harris also makes a valuable contribution to Burkean scholarship, in terms of conceiving of Burke's religious conceptualization beyond Christ-centred religions. Harris acknowledges Burke's writings and speeches on India, and further makes astute observations about Burke anticipating a 'de-Christianisation [of France] that became more powerful as the

[12] *The Cambridge Companion to Edmund Burke*, ed. by David Dwan and Christopher J. Insole, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
[13] Richard Bourke, 'Burke, Enlightenment and Romanticism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Edmund Burke*, ed. by David Dwan and Christopher J. Insole, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 27–41, (pp. 29, 30).
[14] Bourke, 'Burke, Enlightenment and Romanticism', p. 33.
[15] Kelleen O'Connell, 'Edmund Burke: Religion and 18th Century Modernity', (unpublished doctoral thesis, King's College London, 2012), pp. 109-21.

Revolution proceeded'.[16] However, like most studies that acknowledge a religious context for Burke, Harris depicts him only in Christ-centred terms—as a Christian statesman, 'deeply interested in Christianity and its importance for society'.[17] Harris rightly posits that Burke's 'endorsement of other revealed religions does not imply that Burke forewent Christianity […]'.[18] However, he then adds that Burke did not entertain 'relativism about religious truth'.[19] He further argues that 'Burke, in any case, was clear that the civilization, which had a Christian component, had produced at least some results that were superior to those found in India'.[20] First, as Burke was not a high churchman, religious truth was not his agenda. Second, I will show in my thesis how Burke does entertain relativism about religious cultural legitimacy, which differs from Harris' argument. In a further departure from Harris, I will also show (particularly, in Chapter 2) that, for Burke, a Christian component is not necessary to produce a moral civilization.[21] I also believe that my work complements Harris' by examining Burke beyond the image of him as a Christian apologist, but rather as a multicultural quasi-religious thinker.

In any case, Burke's encounter with religion in a global context, has not yet received more than a share in a larger compendium of varying studies concerning Burke; I believe that Harris' work, especially, has given momentum to (what we can now perceive as) an ongoing conversation about Burke's religious thought—a conversation

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[16] Ian Harris, 'Burke and Religion', in *The Cambridge Companion to Edmund Burke*, ed. by David Dwan and Christopher J. Insole, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 92–103, (p. 101).
[17] *Ibid.*, p. 92.
[18] *Ibid.*, p. 99.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 99.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 99.
[21] In Chapter 2, I point out Burke's argument in the Hastings' trial that explained the laws of morality were the same everywhere, O'Connell, p. 146; In the same chapter, I point out how Burke explains that non-Anglican sects are just as equitable and religious as non-Anglican sects, p. 163.

that still begs elaboration. It is my intent to contribute to this conversation by offering elaborations on Burke's global religious thought, in the full-length dimension of a doctoral thesis. For example, what about the ways in which his arguments resonate with (and, at times, rely on) characteristics of non-Christian themes, non-God-centred themes, with unholy themes, and even atheistic themes (which Harris observes Burke opposing)? I believe there is more to be said about the complexities in Burke's literary representation of religion, especially as it is translated through twentieth and twenty-first century theories of modernity.

Studies that treat Burke in a religious context do so strictly in Christian terms, generally in order to support reactionary-conservative interpretations of Burke, which tout him as the father of modern Conservatism, reacting against change in order to preserve 'the conservative good life'.[22] In this thesis, I offer an interpretation of Burke to counter those that emphasise his reactionary attributes. I demonstrate how Burke is not opposed to change; rather, the representation of his religious thought in his writing demonstrates malleability and modification as a means of conservation.

Of course, it is known that Edmund Burke officially served in parliament as a Whig and as a member of the Anglican Church.[23] Declarations of his personal position as a member of the Anglican Church are seen in such places as his 1779 letter to the Reverend John Erskine (discussed at length in Chapter 2 of this thesis): 'I am by choice and by Taste, as well as by Education, a very attached member of the Establish[ed]

[22] Frohnen, p. 9.
[23] Paul Langford, 'Burke, Edmund (1729/30–97)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, January 19th, 2012.

Church of England.'[24] His official position in parliament as a defender of the established Anglican tradition is evident in such instances as his vote against the revocation of clerical subscription—what Brian Young succinctly defines as the required belief in 'such man-made formulas as the Athanasian Creed and the Thirty-Nine Articles enforced on clergymen when taking orders, and on undergraduates either taking their degree (at Cambridge) or in order to matriculate (at Oxford)'.[25] In the debate over clerical subscription in the House of Commons, on 6 February 1772, Burke stated:

> For my own part I am no friend to innovations in religion, when the people are not, in consequence of some religious abuse, much aggrieved. That was the case at the Reformation, and then would I have heartily concurred in the alteration at that time made, had I been a member of this house. But had I possessed a vote, when the directory was going to be established, I would have divided for the Common Prayer; and, had I lived when the Common-Prayer was re-established, I would have voted for the Directory. The reason is obvious, They were not essentially different, neither contained any thing contrary to the scriptures, or that could shock a rational Christian.[26]

While the passage above could seem, initially, to be a reactionary statement against change, Burke also makes it clear that he advocates innovation in religion, if it is

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[24] Edmund Burke, 'Letter to Rev. John Erskine', (April 1779), in *Correspondence of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke Between the Year 1744 and the period of his decease in 1797*, ed. by Charles William, Earl Fitzwilliam and Lieutenant General Sir Richard Bourke, K.C.B., 4 vols, (London: Francis and John Rivington, 1844), II, pp. 268–73, (p. 269).
[25] Young, p. 21.
[26] Edmund Burke, *Speech on Clerical Subscription*, in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: Party, Parliament and the American Crisis, 1766– 1774*, ed. by Paul Langford et al., 9 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), II, pp. 359–64, (p. 364).

needed—as in the Reformation. He admits that (had he been serving in parliament at the time) he would have voted in favour of the Directory of Worship in 1645, which made allowances for Puritan objections to the Book of Common Prayer, because its deviation was not so radical. Earlier in the speech, he had explained, 'Our ancestors were neither so bigoted nor so ill informed as to leave no door open for reformation [...]'.[27] Burke is, of course, defending Protestant reformation, but, more broadly, defending the preservation of the capacity for change and deviation in the conceptualization of religious establishment.

If in my thesis I were concerned with discerning Burke's official religious affiliation, I would place arguments closely alongside J.C.D. Clark's defence of Burke's 'lifelong Whig identity':[28]

> […] Burke's eirenic attitude to other denominations than the Church of England, of which he was formally a member, was not the result of a concealed attachment to Rome; rather, Burke's relaxed approach to the Church of England's claim about its ecclesiastical polity, his goodwill towards Protestant and Catholic Dissenters, and his functional rather than principled view (at least before the 1790s) of the legal defences of the Establishment, the famous trope of "Church and State", were all part of Burke's Protestant Latitudinarianism.[29]

Burke declared, 'I am attached to Christianity at large; much from conviction; more from affection […] I would risque a great deal to prevent its being extinguished anywhere or in

[27] *Ibid*. p. 360.
[28] Clark, 'Religious Affiliation', p. 1035.
[29] *Ibid.*, p. 1037.

any of its shapes'.[30] For the purposes of stating his official public religious identity, we can officially know that Burke was an Anglican Christian, moreover, a Protestant Latitudinarian. Frederick Dryer also provides a similar defence of this identity for Burke:

> His professions of Christianity were strong, persistent, and presumably, sincere. It does mean, however, that there was nothing peculiarly Catholic or high church in his faith. It means also that there was nothing distinctive or eccentric about his faith in the context of eighteenth-century public life. He was a latitudinarian in an age when latitudinarianism was the conventional and orthodox fashion of churchmanship for men of his station and circumstances.[31]

Studies such as Clark's and Dryer's, have made strong cases defending Burke's Anglican Latitudinarian identity; however, the objective of my study is to highlight the characteristics beyond this identity—the non-traditional, multicultural, characteristics of Burke's religious thought as is appears in his literature. I would like to offer an analysis of Burke that is more complex than simply categorizing him as Latitudinarian because it is the most accurate label available, and such a classification was conventional for men of his stratum. It is my objective to recognize the ways in which Burke's representation of religions extends beyond traditional Anglican belief. If we consider the clerical subscription issue, as above, we see an argument motivated by obligation to the state, not religious truth and genuine religious belief. Dryer observes '[i]n the debate on the Feathers Tavern Petition of 1772, Burke upheld the obligation of Church of England

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[30] Edmund Burke, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. by Thomas Copeland, *et al*., 9 vols, (Cambridge and Chicago: Cambridge University Press), VI, p. 215.
[31] Dryer, 'Burke's Religion', p. 212.

Clergymen to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles'; he goes on to write, 'Burke defended clerical subscription to the articles on considerations of secular contract and secular employment.'[32] This is evident in Burke's *Speech on the Acts of Uniformity*, February 6, 1772:

> If you will have a religion publicly practiced and publicly taught, you must have a power to say what that religious will be which you will protect and encourage, and to distinguish it by such marks and characteristics as you in your wisdom shall think fit.[33]

We can perceive Burke's representation of religious thought, then, following a secular logic, as opposed to genuine Anglican belief. Hence, the exploration of characteristics beyond Anglican belief in Burke's representation of religion is valid. It also is valid to identify Latitudinarian toleration in Burke's representation of religions and religious thought; as Dryer writes: 'He [Burke] came to look upon all Christian churches as possessing equal merits in orthodoxy and authority. […] He thought the right of toleration could be extended to Jews, Muhammadans, and pagans.'[34] However, I will explain later in the thesis how the representation of his religious thought in his writings extends beyond a Latitudinarian commitment to limited religious toleration of his time, to a multicultural commitment to religious diversity.[35] I agree with Dryer when he observes, '[w]hatever religion was favored by the state, its establishment in Burke's mind owed

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[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 203, 204.
[33] Edmund Burke, *Speech on the Acts of Uniformity*, February 6, 1772, in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, 12 vols, (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1901), VII, pp. 3–21, (p. 16).
[34] Dryer, 'Burke's Religion', p. 203.
[35] O'Connell, pp. 165, 168.

nothing to the truth of its tenets or to the authority of its clergy.'[36] In fact, I would elaborate on this observation to argue that Burke's religious thought communicates an imperial duty to embrace established religious cultures, and to legitimize any religion firmly anchored in culture. This, I believe, evinces his ability to think multiculturally; it does not evince Christ-centred, reactionary conservatism.

No study of Burke allows his religious thought (the representation of it in his literature, specifically) to transcend traditional contexts, in order to translate its importance to more recent generations—allowing 'that Burke's writings transcend their various contexts, in terms of their themes and their importance to subsequent generations'.[37] While I intend to contextualize Burke's representation of religion in eighteenth-century public life, the above summary of a philosophical approach from David Dwan and Christopher J. Insole's *Cambridge Companion to Burke* gives permission for new scholars, in a way, to allow Burke's writing to transcend contexts that would restrict our application of Burke's thought to the eighteenth century. To this end, I believe we can illuminate further Burke's expanded, multicultural, quasi-religious thought through the analysis offered in twentieth and twenty-first century theories of modernity. My thesis is a deconstruction of Burke's anti-exclusionary religious language to suggest that its eighteenth-century context anticipates certain concepts communicated in more recent depictions of modernity (i.e., Zygmunt Bauman, Marshall Berman, Paul Heelas, Terry Eagleton, Phillip Blond, John Milbank, Jacques Derrida, and Michel

[36] Dryer, 'Burke's Religion', p. 209.
[37] David Dwan and Christopher J. Insole, 'Introduction: Philosophy in Action' *The Cambridge Companion to Edmund Burke*, ed. by David Dwan and Christopher J. Insole, (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2012), pp. 1–15, (p. 3); Dwan and Insole are referring to F.P. Lock's contribution to the Companion, 'Burke's Life', pp. 15–27.

Foucault): for example, the cultural conflict between indigenous religious identity and modern globalization, and the perpetual ossification and erosion of religious concepts and institutions.

The earliest critical interpretations of the life and work of Edmund Burke were avowedly partisan. One of the first comprehensive studies of Burke appeared in 1798, when Charles McCormick published his *Memoirs of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke*.[38] While McCormick claims to be delivering an impartial overview of the achievements of an accomplished individual, the study is revealed as a rather blistering attack on Burke. In addition to accusing Burke of succumbing to fits of rage, it includes an accusation of Burke as a political apostate because of his opposition to the French Revolution and departure from Charles James Fox.[39]

> From the first moment of Mr. Burke's apostacy, whenever he took occasion to mention any eminent advocate for civil or religious liberty, he seemed to foam at the mouth, and, in the transports of his rage and malice, to pay no regard to truth, to candour, to conviction, to common decency, or common sense.[40]

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[38] Charles McCormick, *Memoirs of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke Or an Impartial Review of His Private Life, His Public Conduct, His Speeches in Parliament, and the different productions of his pen, whether political or literary: interspersed with a variety of curious anecdotes, and extracts from his secret correspondence with some of the most distinguished characters in Europe* (London: Lee and Hurst, 1798 and recently reprinted by Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 2010).

[39] Later in this thesis, I will discuss how Burke and Fox diverge over their views regarding the French revolution, resulting in the split of the Whig party. L.G. Mitchell, 'Fox, Charles James, (1749–1806)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004, [July 19th, 2012].

[40] McCormick, p. 347.

In the same year, Robert Bisset published *The Life of Edmund Burke, Comprehending an Impartial Account of his Literary and Political Efforts* (1798).[41] Differing from McCormick's study, Bisset argues that—in communicating the truth about a life—'A necessary constituent of authenticity is impartiality.'[42] These two early studies serve as important signposts that point the direction in which the interpretation of Edmund Burke's work has progressed through to present day. The question of Burke's consistency (or inconsistency, if interpretations evince political apostasy—like McCormick's) is one with which scholars still engage, over two hundred years later. Scholars including Terry Eagleton, Christopher Reid, and Francis O'Gorman all address a perceived shift from Burke's 'early Whig ideal of limited government to a later stress on the powers of state', with the threat of the French Revolution.[43] Eagleton writes: 'he [Burke] lent his support to a wide range of repressive measures, which in the name of freedom transformed late-eighteenth-century Britain into a police state. […] Burke 'urged the military crushing of France and the full-blooded restoration of *the ancien régime*'.[44] Reid also observes 'a gradual slide in Burke's thought from consent to coercion'.[45] The question of Burke's consistency often is linked with the image of Burke portrayed by McCormick above: as an enemy to civil and religious liberty. Many recent studies of Burke offer similar interpretations of Burke: as the reactionary father of Conservatism,

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[41] Robert Bisset published *The Life of Edmund Burke, Comprehending an Impartial Account of his Literary and Political Efforts, And a Sketch of the Conduct and Character of his most Eminent Associates, Coadjutors, and Opponents*, 2 vols, (London: George Cawthorn, 1798, and reprinted by Kessinger publishing, 2010).
[42] Bisset, p. 11, 278.
[43] Francis O'Gorman, *Edmund Burke: His Political Philosophy* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1973), p. 139.
[44] Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, (London: Verso, 1995), p. 35.
[45] Christopher Reid, *Edmund Burke and the Practice of Political Writing*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985), p. 24.

opposed to change. Russell Kirk is credited not only for chronicling the modern Conservative movement, but characterizes Burke as a philosophical founder of Conservatism.[46] Francis Canavan also contributed greatly to the demonstration of Burke's conservative ideological consistency through the 'New Conservative' abstraction of Burke's thought.[47] The residual effects of these interpretations of Burke as a reactionary are still apparent in studies that are more recent. Terry Eagleton describes Burke as 'resolutely anti-Enlightenment', and Stephen K. White emphasizes Burke's 'reactionary excesses and blindness' in his trepidations over the French Revolution; such studies perpetuate the interpretation of Burke as an enemy to religious and civil liberty.[48] Interpretations that label Burke as the 'founder of modern Conservatism' set a precedent that links *modern* and *Conservatism*, demanding the concepts be addressed in relation to one another when interpreting Burke. [49] While the concepts of modernity and Conservatism do not, as such, exclude or preclude one another, these interpretations contribute to an ultimate portrayal of Burke as anti-modern by emphasising his hostile reactions to change. Therefore, I am compelled to engage with interpretations of Burke's Conservatism if I am to understand his work in the context of modernity. I wish to offer an interpretation of Burke that counterbalances the portrayal of Burke as an anti-modern reactionary. I do so by relying on the work of J.G.A. Pocock, S.J. Barnett, Bruno Latour and others to understand the generalisation of modernity in Burke's time.[50]

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[46] Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind from Burke to Santayana*, (Chicago, Ill.: Regnery, 1953 and reprinted as *The Conservative Mind from Burke to Eliot*, 2001), p. 7.
[47] Francis Canavan, *The Political Reason of Edmund Burke*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1960), p. 163.
[48] Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 42; and White, p. 83.
[49] Frohnen, p. 9.
[50] As cited above: Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*; Barnett, *The Enlightenment and Religion: the Myths of Modernity*; Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*.

I further argue that there is a consistency in Burke's thinking, and it is to be found in his attitude to religion, which is informed by the early Enlightenment thought of Montesquieu, among other sources. In his *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies* (1793), Burke posits:

> There are some fundamental points in which nature never changes—but they are few and obvious, and belong rather to morals than to politics. But so far as regards political matter, the human mind and human affairs are susceptible to infinite modifications, and of combinations whole new and unlooked for.[51]

I believe that any perceived modifications made regarding political matters in Burke's thinking reveal a consistency in his thinking about the religious instinct and its vicissitudes.

Stephen K. White is correct in suggesting that interpretations of Burke are lacking in a comprehensive critical understanding of Burke's analysis of modernity. Along with David P. Fidler and Jennifer Welsh, White looks at Burke's political relevance during and after the Cold War.[52] Like Eagleton, White is concerned with the political context of Burke's thought, as ascertained through his language of 'aesthetic-effective terms'.[53]

> The language I am referring to is an aesthetic one of the sublime and beautiful and of human affections or sentiments associated with them. […] I do think we fail to understand fully how he construed political modernity

[51] Edmund Burke, *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies* (1793), in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: The French Revolution, 1790-1794*, ed. by Paul Langford, and L.G. Mitchell, 9 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), VIII, pp. 452-500, (p. 498).
[52] David P. Fidler and Jennifer Welsh, *Empire and Community Edmund Burke's Writings and Speeches on International Relations*, ed. by David P. Fidler and Jennifer Welsh, (Colorado: Westview Press, 1999), p. 57.
[53] White, p. 73.

> and its dangers unless we attend more carefully to this language [of aesthetics].[54]

Rather than wondering (as White does) about Burke's analysis of political modernity, I wish to wonder about Burke's analysis of religious modernity: Burke's confrontation with modernity occurs conceptually on a global scale; there is a need to understand the centrality of religion in this confrontation. In this thesis, I demonstrate that attention to Burke's religious language helps to remedy the lack of understanding when it comes to comprehending the sort of modernity Burke construed. Throughout Burke's writing, his religious language promotes modernity in a way that undermines his anxiety toward it. I believe that eighteenth-century religious traditionalists preserve established religious concepts and institutions by demonstrating a compatibility with diversity: through welcoming a certain diversity, and softening the boundaries between differing religious identities, established religion survives the shifting sands of revolution and early globalization.

Paddy Bullard and Jane Hodson also make close studies of Burke's language and rhetorical language to understand his confrontation with political modernity. Bullard's study presents a theory of Burke's rhetoric: the ethos-driven 'rhetoric of character'.[55] Bullard argues that the combination of rhetoric and character 'can help us describe the function and the beauty of Burke's writings', suggesting that Burke's conceptualization of character 'offers a key to understanding the integrity of his political thought, and to the art of his rhetoric'.[56] Bullard observes that Burke believes that effective means of

[54] White, p. 5.
[55] Bullard, p. 3.
[56] *Ibid*., p. 3, 11.

persuasion are through 'the display of one's own good character, the rhetoric of ethos'.[57] In terms of Burke utilizing language appropriate to the demands of a particular circumstance, Richard Bourke also argues that it is through Burke's rhetoric of character that one can best understand Burke's political purpose.[58] Like so many other studies that emphasise a reactionary Burke, Hodson's engagement with Burke chiefly is concerned with *Reflections*. In addition, like studies that view Burke as a rhetorician, Hodson explores 'the relationship between political persuasion, literary style, and linguistic theory [as] it relates to the political viewpoint and rhetorical aims of its author'.[59] Hodson's study clinically is focused on the function of language in the pamphlet war surrounding the French Revolution by drafting (e.g., tables on punctuation, polysyllabic injunctions, exclamations, questions, and dashes).[60] I do not approach Burke's thought, or his language, in this way. Nor do I propose a theory of Burke's rhetoric. My thesis is not focused on character or beauty, nor engaged with questions surrounding effective oral deliberation in rhetoric.[61] However, my thesis is intended to complement the work of Bullard, Hodson, and Bourke by considering the effects of Burke's religious thought on his language.[62]

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[57] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[58] Richard Bourke, 'Theory and Practice: The French Revolution in Political Judgement', in *Political Judgment*, ed. by Richard Bourke and Raymond Guess (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 73–109, (p. 74); Ian Hampshire-Monk also portrays Burke as a rhetorician in 'Rhetoric and Opinion in the Politics of Edmund Burke', *History of Political Thought*, 3, (1988), 455–84. For the rhetorical qualities of Burke's approach to law, see O'Gorman, *Edmund Burke: His Political Philosophy*, pp. 98, 104–05.
[59] Jane Hodson, *Language and Revolution in burke, Wollstonecraft, Paine and Godwin*, (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2007), p. 1.
[60] Hodson's study focuses on four texts: Burke's *Reflections*; Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790); Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791); and William Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793).
[61] Bullard, p. 3,11.
[62] Bullard's study should also be lauded for its look at the reception of Burke's oral performance (by Wordsworth, Fanny Burney and others), and its placement of Burke in a tradition of Irish 'national

Many interpretations of Burke such as the ones above (e.g., from Eagleton, White, Bullard) approach him as an aesthetician and a rhetorician to draw connections expertly from his aesthetic language to his political theory. For White and Bullard, Burke's 'aesthetic-affective language' needs careful attention; and contributes much to understanding Burke's political theory.[63] For Eagleton too, Burke's 'aesthetics takes over something of the traditional function of rhetoric […] aesthetics for the early Burke is the theory, and the politics the practice'.[64] Most scholarship, if it considers Burke's language, looks at 'a relation between aesthetic enquiry and political practice'.[65] In *The Ideology of the Aesthetic* (1990), Eagleton's main objective in his engagement with Burke is to link aesthetics to politics to argue the novelty of bourgeois aesthetics, and aesthetics as an art form, as emerging from the Enlightenment.[66] Eagleton's engagement with Burke is strictly 'as an aesthetician', contributing to the tradition of Romanticism as stemming from the Enlightenment.[67] I wish to engage with Burke as a quasi-religious thinker of the Enlightenment. White offers a theory that may account for the increase in attention to aesthetic deliberation in the eighteenth century:

> [T]here existed no religious zeal comparable to that of the Puritans and others in the seventieth century. […] If this is true, then the rise of attentiveness of an aesthetic experience that seems to partake of the thrill

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eloquence', or oratorical skill, alongside Thomas Sheridan, Edward Lovett Pearce, Thomas Leland, and John Lawson, pp. 13, 52–173.
[63] White, p. 5, and Bullard, p. 3.
[64] Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 52.
[65] *Ibid.*, p. 52.
[66] Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 8.
[67] *Ibid.*, p. 57.

> of epic political deeds and the profundity of religious conviction becomes perhaps a little more comprehensible.[68]

In other words, eighteenth-century minds were left theorizing about the experience of religious revolution, rather than living it. I believe White underestimates the continual transformation of religious institutions and identities in the eighteenth century, and the enthusiasm surrounding the issue. Further, I believe there is room for understanding the religious context of the revolutions that characterize the eighteenth century (e.g., the American Revolution, the French Revolution); there is a scope for understanding the religious dimension to Burke's language in his engagement with these events.

I wish to elaborate on the way in which my study differs from others that seat Burke (however briefly) in a religious context. Ian Hampshire-Monk suggests that Burke's fideistic favouring of emotion over reason perpetuated a political tradition of 'skepticism about the rational demonstrability of religious truths', which was 'at the heart of English Conservatism'.[69] However, like Eagleton and White, Hampshire-Monk highlights Burke's Conservatism. I believe that a nuanced focus on Burke's multicultural conceptualization of global religions will allow us to construe more of Burke's progressiveness, which is how this thesis is intended to complement the work of Hampshire-Monk. I do not intend to refute any claims made by Hampshire-Monk, but

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[68] White, p. 24; Also, on the decrease of intensity with regard to religious faith, see Roy Porter's, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century*, (London: Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1990), pp. 184–200; also, Jeffrey Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society, Lambeth 1870–1930*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), writes about the evolution of a 'diffusive Christianity' through the eighteenth century, p. 94.

[69] Ian Hampshire Monk, 'Burke and the Religious Sources of Skeptical Conservatism', in *The Skeptical Tradition around 1800: Skepticism in Philosophy, Science, and Society*, ed. by Nohan Van Der Zande and Richard H. Popkin, (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers Dordrecht, 1998), pp. 248, 235; 'Reliance on faith alone rather than scientific reasoning or philosophy in questions of religion', Oxford English Dictionary, 'fideism', [October 29th, 2010]
2010].

only to engage with his work, and others, to raise fruitful questions, such as: What does Burke's representation of religion in his writings and speeches reveal about the conceptualization of religion in modernity?

Eagleton, Conor Cruise O'Brien, Thomas Mahoney, and Eamonn O'Flaherty have all grappled with Burke's Catholic context; all of these scholars skilfully engage with issues surrounding Burke's engagement with Catholic enfranchisement, and follow the issue as it plays out through the nineteenth century[70] Scholars such as Seamus Deane and Luke Gibbons examine Burke's understanding of the providential obligation(s) of the Anglican state toward non-Anglican colonial cultures.[71] The studies that draw parallels between Burke's approach to Catholic emancipation and freedom for the Hindus, for example, emphasise the influence of his Catholic roots when it comes to sympathy for non-Christian cultures. To my mind, it is highly speculative to suggest that Burke's support for the Hindu people (during the events surrounding the Hastings trial and the affairs of the East India Trading Company) was simply displaced emotional attachment from his Catholic connections.[72] Elizabeth Lambert supports this position in her study, questioning the validity of a Catholic identity for Burke. Lambert refutes O'Brien's claim that Dr. Hussey (Roman Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore) gave Burke the Catholic sacrament of last rites on his deathbed, by citing a letter from Edward Nagle (maternal relative to Burke) to French Laurence (friend to Burke and later, literary executor), written on 8 July 1797, which specifically outlines the 'necessity of Dr.

[70] Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*; O'Brien, *The Great Melody*.; Mahoney, *Edmund Burke and Ireland*; O'Flaherty, 'Burke and the Catholic Question'.
[71] Seamus Deane, *Foreign Affections: Essays on Edmund Burke* (Cork, Ireland: Cork University Press, 2005); Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland, Aesthetics, politics, and the colonial sublime*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[72] 'Feelings which Burke represses over Ireland come out in other contexts, over the French Revolution to some extent, but especially over India'. O'Brien, p. xxvi.

Hussey's keeping away'.[73] Lambert also argues that there is little evidence to suggest that Jane (Burke's wife) was a practicing Catholic during her marriage to Burke or even after his death.[74] To use Jonathan Israel's assessment, the radical Enlightenment 'severed the roots of traditional European culture in the sacred, magic, kingship, and hierarchy, secularizing all institutions and ideas […] demolished legitimation of monarchy […]'.[75] Therefore, instead of wondering (like O'Brien, O'Flaherty, Mahoney, Lambert, and others) about the suspected influence of Burke's Catholic roots, I wonder about the very attachment of roots within the Enlightenment—an era wherein the roots of religious cultures were severed, demolished, or at least disrupted.

In this thesis, I find a way to articulate the complexities of Burke's religious conceptualization by reflecting it against recent theories of modernity. Eagleton suggests a similar reflection of Burke's thought against a more recent theorist: 'With Burke, then, we hover on the historical threshold of everything that Michel Foucault abhorred: a patient charting of the very depths of subjectivity, so that men and women may be the more dexterously inscribed with power.'[76] Eagleton's argument precedes Bullard's, which also shows that Burke valued in-depth knowledge of the disposition and character of colonists, as a guide to an appropriate legislative approach, as a means to exercise power fairly and effectively. White draws a similar connection from Burke to modern thinkers: 'One hears echoes of 20th century thinkers […] Heidegger, or Horkheimer, and

[73] Lambert, 'Edmund Burke's Religion', p. 20; O'Brien, p. 590–91.
[74] Lambert, 'Edmund Burke's Religion', p. 19.
[75] Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment, Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. vi.
[76] Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 37.

Adorno'.[77] Expanding on this theoretical frame, I would like to suggest that with Burke's thinking on religion, we stand on the threshold of what Zygmunt Bauman, Marshal Berman, Paul Heelas, and others describe as: the fluctuating condition of institutions (e.g. the church) and socially agreed upon concepts (e.g. the definition of religious identities) in the shifting sands of modernity.

I also believe Eagleton's assessment of the paradoxical nature of aesthetics can be applied to Burke's religious language as a way of revealing its paradoxical nature:

> Aesthetics is thus always a contradictory, self-undoing sort of project, which in promoting the theoretical value of its object risks emptying it of exactly that specificity or ineffability, which was thought to rank among its most precious features. The very language which elevates art offers perpetually to undermine it.[78]

Eagleton links Burke to Hume by deconstructing their conceptualization of law. At its source lies its capacity for negation: 'The law is at once citizen and terrorist, the source of all order and the potential negation of it'.[79] I will demonstrate how Burke's conceptualization of religion can be deconstructed in the same manner: at its source lies its capacity to subvert and modify traditional conceptions of religion. The capacity for Burke's conceptualization of religion to negate itself lies within a reliance on themes antithetical to his message. This sort of relationship in Burke's rhetoric is reflective of the critical thinking about religious dogma in the eighteenth century. Brian Young explains the relationship between dogma and anti-dogmatism as characteristic of a conservative

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[77] White, p. 84.
[78] Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, pp. 2–3.
[79] Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 46.

enlightenment: 'Antidogmatism needs a dogma against which to react […]'.[80] Young later continues:

> The divines who promoted the cause of Protestant 'liberty' were uneasy about the more Catholic conceptions of Christianity [that they saw in the forced subscription to the Athanasian Creed and the Thirty-Nine Articles] which they felt to have long compromised the principles of Protestantism within the Church of England […]. It was dogmatism, the authorization of tradition and history as guarantees of religious truth, which these men resented […]. Antidogmatism is at least congruent with, and is in many respects a development of, that older tradition within the Restored church which has become known as 'latitudinarianism', and it was such men who promoted many of the principles of a conservative Enlightenment in which reason and experience were praised as important components of religious belief.[81]

Burke's vote to preserve clerical subscription does not oppose dogma; so, a Latitudinarian open-mindedness would perhaps not be an appropriate categorization of Burke's stance on that issue. However, elsewhere in Burke's writing, we will see his arguments for the preservation of established religious tradition engaging with, and even promoting, a dilution of religious dogma through open-mindedness to differing sects. This kind of convoluted rhetorical circumstance is characteristic of the Anglican Church of the eighteenth century; Young further explains:

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[80] Young, p. 21.
[81] Young, p. 11.

> The Church of England of the 1700s was a divided body, and its divisions had their political analogues in an age of increasing partisanship. […] The Whig clergy were themselves often divided over doctrine and discipline: controversy was endemic to Anglicanism in this period.[82]

Therefore, as in this thesis I proceed to evince the paradoxical relationships in Burke's rhetoric, between dogma and anti-dogma, between Established Religion and Freethinking, etc., we can know it as characteristic of the division and controversy in the eighteenth-century Church of England, and (what we can begin to understand as) Enlightenment modernity. Yet, like Eagleton (who compares Burke to Foucault) and White (who compares Burke to Heidegger), we can also recognize the signature of Burke's thought in more recent theories of modernity.

The Characteristics and Parameters of Eighteenth-century Modernity—A Framework for more recent Depictions of Modernity

The prominence of religious language in Burke's writing, as well as the prominence of religion as a subject matter in Burke's writing, reveals a major oversight in our understanding of Burke. The neglect of Burke's religious thought is curious, because his early publications as well as his engagement with events throughout his political career can be construed as being deeply based in religious context(s). David P. Fidler and Jennifer Welsh observe: 'Burke's struggle to reform British imperial policy in Ireland, America, and India was largely about getting the British government to respect diversity, whether in the form of the American national character, Irish Catholicism, or

[82] Young, p. 19.

traditional Indian culture.'[83] The struggles that comprise the list of issues that sustained much of Burke's attention throughout his political career are, indeed, struggles concerning cultural diversity. However, there is opportunity for understanding Burke's approach to these struggles, alongside his early writings, in terms of respecting religious establishment and tradition. This is the objective of this thesis.

Delineating parameters within which to define modernity as a concept or a condition bears discussion. Stephen K. White begins the timeline of political modernity for Burke in 1780, ushered in by the Gordon Riots; he views this event in particular as changing Burke's opinion about the capacity for a populace to control their will.[84] There may be some scholarly blindness in confining the emergence of political modernity to the 1780s. Earlier events would have demonstrated to Burke the potential tyranny of an empowered, self-interested sect: when Burke was residing in Dublin as a secretary to the MP William Gerard Hamilton, he was horrified at the judicial murders committed in Munster, responding to the outbreak of peasant disturbances in 1761; some of Burke's maternal relatives were also implicated in the disturbances.[85] Events such as this as well as his familiarity with the oppressive Penal Laws in Ireland would have helped to cultivate anxiety about unbridled will in methods of governance. If we think in a religious context, there is evidence of this anxiety in Burke's writing from the 1750s and 1760s, inasmuch as it displays a concern about the disintegration of established modes of governance (i.e. the church). Certainly, for Burke, the framework of modernity must reach back further than 1780.

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[83] Fidler and Welsh, p. 65.
[84] White, p. 5.
[85] Paul Langford, 'Burke, Edmund (1729/30–1797)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, January 19th, 2012.

J.G.A. Pocock provides an appropriate framework for appreciating what eighteenth-century minds understood to be modern. This will help us to contextualize Burke in the terms of his own time, and to recognize how the eighteenth-century interpretation relates to more recent interpretations of modernity. Describing 'moderns' breaking away from an 'ancient and medieval past', Pocock explains how eighteenth-century minds, while they did not discount history between Romans and moderns, organised their history in this way:

> There was a highly usable ancient and medieval past in this culture debated between opposed civil and ecclesiastical persuasions. So indeed there was in France, debated between exponents of the *théses royale* and *nobiliaire*; but it is hard to find any cohering group of English *philosophes* aiming to write off everything between the Romans and the moderns as a millennium of unrelieved darkness. When the argument is put forward that English liberties are modern and not ancient, it is a move in the party polemic—typically a defence of the Walpolean regime—and resist on a thesis emerging from the interregnum of the previous century, of central importance in the development of a British philosophical history.[86]

Pocock goes on to describe a 'Bacon-Harrington-Fletcher thesis'; referring to the theories of Francis Bacon, James Harrington, and Andrew Fletcher, Pocock explains the replacement of feudal systems by commercial relations across Europe:

> The Bacon-Harrington-Fletcher thesis was potent among the paradigms

[86] Pocock, *Barbarism*, II, p.170; for this argument, see also Reed Browning, *The Political and Constitutional Ideas of the Court Whigs*, (Baton Rouge, USA: Louisiana State University Press, 1982) and Isaac Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968).

> which the English had for organising their history, and it is important that nothing quite like it could be established among the actors in the Scottish or French history, because it became one of the building-blocks in the British construction of a "philosophic history" in the eighteenth century. It identified a "modern" history that had begun about 1500 and been renewed about 1700, and did so by means of a generalisation that operated in legal, military and social history at the same time, offering a prehistory and antithesis to the portrait of commercial, polite and enlightened modernity; the latter could be either praised or criticised with the means that it provided.[87]

Essentially, for Enlightenment minds, organising history 'entailed a search for the origins of a post-feudal and post-ecclesiastical modernity'.[88] In terms of organising a history of the established church, Pocock asserts, 'Modern ecclesiastical history begins with the Reformation'.[89] I believe Pocock's version of modernity, as interpreted by eighteenth-century minds, is the chief version of modernity with which Burke engages, and the version of modernity to which all other theories of modernity referred to in this thesis correspond: a post-feudal, post-Reformation construction begun in the sixteenth century, and renewed in the eighteenth century. Richard Bourke offers analysis that echoes Pocock's construction above, and explains how it is specifically relevant to Burke:

> […] enlightenment for Burke encompassed the progress of society through the expansion of commerce under the protection of law, the improvement

[87] Pocock, *Barbarism*, II, p. 171.
[88] *Ibid.*, p. 264.
[89] Pocock, *Barbarism*, V, p. 341.

> of morals under the government of Providence, and the liberalization of religion under the influence of science.[90]

If the eighteenth-century understanding of a commercial enlightened modernity is the antithesis of its feudal prehistory, then it is relevant to Burke. For example, apropos to Bourke's observation above, we will later see in Chapter 4 of this thesis how Burke diminishes cultural divisions between religious sects, whilst welcoming the influence of scientific enquiry; in Chapter 2, we will see how Burke advocates moral commercial globalization. Of course, Burke was not alone in understanding the momentum and progress of commerce and expansion (the breaking down of the old) between the ancient and the modern. Contemporaries such as David Hume referred to the momentum between ancient and modern; of economics, Hume's *Essays Moral, Political and Literary* (1741–42) is an observation of the ancient prudence of emperors (e.g., Augustus, Tiberius, Vespasian, Severus) and their 'foresight, of saving great sums against any pubic exigency' versus the modern economical convenience: 'On the contrary, our modern expedient, which has become very general, is to mortgage the public revenues, and to trust that posterity will pay off the incumbrances contracted by their ancestors […]'.[91] Of manners, Hume writes in the same work 'that ancient manners were more unfavourable than the modern […]'.[92] J.G.A. Pocock observes David Hume's acknowledgment of modernity as a concept or condition in this same dissertation; he refers to Hume situating the reader:

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[90] Richard Bourke, 'Burke, Enlightenment and Romanticism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Edmund Burke*, ed. by David Dwan and Christopher J. Insole, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 27–41, (p. 27).
[91] David Hume, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, ed. by T.H. Green and T.H. Grose, 2 vols, (London: Longmans, Green, and Co.,1889), I, p. 361.
[92] *Ibid.*, p. 85.

> […I]n the political nation formed by the Union of 1707 and currently governed by the powerful, tough by 1741 disintegrating, regime of Sir Robert Walpole. It is to the moral, political and literary problems of life under that regime, and after it, that the reader's attention is drawn. They are the problems of a polite society, a polite society is conceived as modern (and indeed recent), and modernity is a historical problem which a history must be written to explain.[93]

However, let us consider those theorists who engage with the historical problems (to use Pocock's phrasing above) inherent in thinking of modernity as a condition or concept arising from the eighteenth century. Bruno Latour, for example, suggests that the rise of the scientific method in the eighteenth century engendered a habit of dividing intellectual landscapes into a construction of different disciplines, which has created only the illusion of modernity. (Latour observes the scientific efforts of Robert Boyle, which I also do in Chapter 4 of this thesis). Latour explains: 'Modernity comes in as many versions as there are thinkers or journalists, yet all its definitions point, in one way or another, to the passage of time.'[94] Latour also suggests that modernity 'is much more than an illusion and much less than an essence. It is a force added to others that for a long time it had the power to represent, to accelerate, or to summarize—a power that it no longer entirely holds'.[95] Therefore, there is difficulty in utilizing modernity as a category or label to wholly summarize or represent a mode of thought. However, when allowing Burke's writing to transcend the boundaries of the eighteenth century, I believe we can combat

[93] Pocock, *Barbarism*, II, p. 179.
[94] Latour, p. 10.
[95] *Ibid.*, p. 40.

the dangers of being anachronistic by understanding modernity through terms in which Burke and other Enlightenment minds might have understood it—for example, evincing an eighteenth-century understanding of momentum between ancient and modern in Burke's contemporary Hume (as above). I offer further understanding of the eighteenth-century terms in which Burke might have understood modernity when I analyse Burke alongside Montesquieu and James Foster in Chapter 1, alongside Richard Price in Chapter 3, Joseph Priestley in Chapter 4, and many others throughout. Utilizing twentieth and twenty-first century theories of modernity to illuminate further Burke's religious thought, means, to use S.J. Barnett's conception of it, 'living' with anachronism:

> So, in the practice of historiography, rather than throw our hands up in horror at a long-recognized dilemma, we have little choice but to live with the problem of anachronism and try to remain aware of its dangers.[96]

Barnett lists the problems inherent in interpreting enlightenment texts, which I believe justifies the use of theories beyond the context of the eighteenth century to assist the analysis of such texts:

> Another problem with interpreting historical texts is posed by the tactics sometimes used by eighteenth-century writers to disguise authorial identity, primary intentions or influences in order to avoid the undue attention of the censor. […] Thus, Enlightenment writers, wittingly or unwittingly, could consider a Christian text critical of certain proofs of Christianity—such as Bayle's *Dictionnaire historique et critique*—as therefore antichristian, written from a radical Christian perspective only in

[96] Barnett, p. 202.

> order to avoid censure.[97]

Edmund Burke's habit of disguising authorial identity (which he did for his *Vindication*, for example) resonates with these eighteenth-century devices. The incorporation of theories beyond the eighteenth century helps to stabilize the issues (which Barnett indicated) inherent in analysing historical texts exhibiting Christian (and, unwittingly anti-Christian) characteristics. Moreover, the incorporation of more recent theories about modernity is not such a radical stretch. Most theorists of modernity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries (including the theorists I follow in this thesis) measure the parameters of modernity in a way that is similar to the perception of modern by eighteenth-century minds—as demonstrated by Hume, and described by Pocock above: a construction of a history that separates pre-modern, ancient, feudal systems from the Reformation, and a modern commercial exigency. For example, Jonathan Israel follows these parameters; he measures the global 'making of modernity' as beginning during 'the onset of Enlightenment, and the period 1680–1750 the more dramatic and decisive period of rethinking when the mental world of the west was revolutionized along rationalistic and secular lines', which then resulted in 'an upheaval which heralded the onset of the Enlightenment proper in the closing years of the [eighteenth] century':[98]

> For if the Enlightenment marks the most dramatic step towards secularization and rationalization in Europe's history, it does so no less in the wider history not just of western civilization but, arguably, of the

[97] *Ibid.*, p. 204.
[98] Israel, pp. 14, 20.

> entire world. From this, it plainly follows, it was one of the most important shifts in the history of man.[99]

Barnett also follows the 'post-feudal and post-ecclesiastical' parameters of the Enlightenment (again, using Pocock's phrasing from above); further defining it as a 'modernizing' period, measured partly by the secularization of government, religious attitudes, and (arguably) personal beliefs:

> As a "modernizing" period, the Enlightenment is said to have had some role in the general process of secularization, and the notion of the secular has almost come to embody the notion of modernity. […] One element is the secularization of government and social norms; another is the secularization of religious attitudes, for example the existence or widespread acceptance of the desirability of religious toleration. Another mode concerns that level of piety, belief itself. […] but there is no significant evidence of declining belief.[100]

Jonathan Israel and Talal Asad respectively recognize the secularization of religion and government as marking modernization in the Enlightenment. Asad not only views secularization as central to modernity, but, like Israel, construes secularism as extending beyond western civilization, to a global scale, 'applicable to non-Christian societies everywhere that have become modern'.[101] Norman Sykes also approaches the religious modernization of the eighteenth century, but differs from Asad and Israel when he proposes modernity's laicization of religion, rather its secularization:

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[99] *Ibid.*, p. vi.
[100] Barnett, p. 38.
[101] Talal Asad, *Formations of the Secular, Christianity, Islam, Modernity*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003), p. 2.

> The eighteenth century witnessed a steady and progressive laicisation of religion, which is the keynote of its ecclesiastical development. Hostile critics have preferred to describe the process as the secularisation of the Church; but it may be contended that the laicisation of religion is a more accurate phrase; for albeit the clerical order generally was characterised by a markedly unprofessional temper, the laity not only deemed themselves a proper and necessary part of the organisation of the Christian Church, but acted upon that persuasion with vigour and conviction.[102]

Sykes suggests a scenario in which modernization in the eighteenth century entailed the laity assuming primary power over ecclesiastical order. Essentially, Israel, Barnett, Asad, and Sykes all refer to an outcome resulting in modification of religion's representation in public life. I agree with Richard Bourke, who warns that when analysing modernity of the Enlightenment, we must be careful of 'a secular teleology anxious to reduce enlightenment to the criticism of religion'.[103] Knud Haakonssen also describes a proclivity for orienting an interpretation of modernity in the Enlightenment around an argument that 'the Enlightenment was anti-Christian, anti-Church and at the point of sliding into irreligion and proto-atheism.'[104] My thesis is an acknowledgement of Edmund Burke's engagement with characteristics that are antithetical to the established Christian tradition (irreligion and proto-atheism); I will show how his representation of religion and the church symbiotically depend on characterizations of irreligion, anti-

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[102] Norman Sykes, *Church and State in England in the XVIIIth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), p. 379.
[103] Bourke, 'Burke, Enlightenment and Romanticism', p. 28.
[104] Knud Haakonssen, 'Enlightened Dissent: an introduction', in *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by Knud Haakonssen, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 1; Peter Gay makes this observation in *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*, 2 vols, (London: Wildwood, 1973), I, *The Rise of Modern Paganism*.

Church, and proto-atheism. However, I do not presumptuously posit (as Barnett warns above) a decline in his personal beliefs. The modernization of religious representation in the Enlightenment is not wholly secularization, or laicisation, or anti-Christian, or anti-Church; Knud Haakonssen explains that the Enlightenment religious culture was chiefly concerned with staving off zealotry:

> […T]the Enlightenment was first and foremost a movement to preserve civilised society against any resurgence of religious enthusiasm and superstition, that is to say of evangelical Protestantism and Counter Reformation Catholicism. Europe had only just escaped the barbarism of religious wars, especially civil wars, and the task of enlightened minds was to preserve modern society from the confessional backwoodsmen of all creeds.[105]

Haakonssen describes the religious culture of Burke's time. In Chapters 2 and 3, I will show how Burke's representation of indigenous (religious) cultures evinces a staving off of zealotry, which relates to the preservation of modern society that Haakonssen describes as characteristic of the Enlightenment.

Zygmunt Bauman also defines modernity within the same post-feudalism parameters as the theorists mentioned above (e.g., Pocock, Israel, Barnett, and Sykes), and like Hume before them (as discussed above): he describes early modernity as an era in which solids 'were already rusty, mushy, coming apart at the seams'.[106] This erosion is not the 'liquidity' Bauman uses to describe post-modern contemporary life 'the form of

[105] Haakonssen, p. 2; Haakonssen is referring to Pocock, 'Post-Puritan England and the Problem of the Enlightenment', in *Culture and Politics from Puritanism to the Enlightenment*, ed. by Perez Zagorin, (CA, USA: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 91–113.
[106] Bauman, p. 3.

life currently practiced'.[107] However, we can think of his description of early modernity as appropriate for understanding the relationship between humans and God (as well as humans and their God-centred institutions) as it evolved from ancient, feudal, pre-Reformation to modern, commercial Enlightenment understanding. Essentially, the modern understanding of the cosmic relationship between humans and God is one wherein humans are put 'in charge'.[108] Bauman explains that this modern relationship stems from a modern understanding of evil, which differentiates between natural disaster and man-made evil; he cites Susan Naiman and Jean-Pierre Dupuy among scholars who indicate the 1755 the earthquake, fire, and high tide that destroyed Lisbon as responsible for humans being able to make this differentiation by the eighteenth century.[109] Bauman further explains this modern relationship between humans and God:

> The evident profligacy of evil in the world could not be reconciled with the combination of benevolence and omnipotence imputed to the world's maker and supreme manager. The contradiction could not be resolved; it could be only taken off the agenda by what Max Weber described as *Ernüchterung* ("disenchantment") of Nature—which means derobing Nature of its divine disguise—and chose as the true birth-act of the "modern spirit": that is, of the hubris grounded in the new "we can do it, we will do it" attitude of self-assurance and confidence. [110]

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[107] Zygmunt Bauman, 'Liquid Modernity Revisited', in *Liquid Modernity*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2012), pp. vii–xix, (p. vii).
[108] Zygmunt Bauman, 'Seeking in Modern Athens an Answer to the Ancient Jerusalem Question', *Theory Culture Society*, 71 (2009), 71-91 (p. 80).
[109] Bauman, 'Seeking in Modern Athens', p. 75; See Susan Naiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002) and Jean-Pierre Dupuy, *Petite métaphysique des tsunamis*, (Paris: Seuil, 2005).
[110] Bauman, 'Seeking in Modern Athens', p. 80.

According to Bauman, the breaking down of ancient relationships marks the birth of a modern spirit—in the case above, the breaking down of God's ultimate power and humankind's assertion of hubris. Bauman's description of the modern assertion of hubris is relevant to the way in which Burke represents religious themes; we will see in Chapter 4 how Burke worries about the political implications of humans attempting to acquire powers traditionally attributed to God. Ernst Cassirer writes: 'If the Enlightenment begins by breaking down the older form of philosophical knowledge, the metaphysical systems, then Burke is located squarely within it'.[111] I agree with Cassirer, and wish to complement his observation through the analysis presented in my thesis. For example, in this introduction, I will indicate Burke's worry over the ancient doctrine of the Trinity; in Chapter 1, I examine Burke's concern regarding the tradition of revealed religion at large. Bauman and Cassirer are not alone in interpreting the growth out of a post-sixteenth-century, post-Reformation society as a *breaking down* of old traditions; for example, Marshall Berman asserts that the constructions of 'seventeenth-century natural law collapse in the eighteenth century'.[112] Berman describes the gradual spreading of empiricist modes of thought during the eighteenth century.[113] He attributes this to figures of eighteenth-century Paris, such as Montesquieu and Rousseau, and explains how the modern problem of individualistic authenticity 'emerged and developed out of problems central to Enlightenment'.[114] Such an analysis of modernity relates to Burke: in Chapter 1, I will show how Burke follows Montesquieu's thinking on religion. Much scholarship

[111] Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans by Fritz C.A. Koelln and James P. Pettegrove, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), p. vii.
[112] Marshall Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity: Radical Individualism and the Emergence of Modern Society*, (New York: Atheneum, 1970), p. 11.
[113] Berman, *The Politics of Authenticity*, p. 13.
[114] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

(such as the theories above) confidently places the emergence of modern problems and modern relationships (as they change between humans, God, and religious institutions) in the context of the eighteenth century. Moreover, the above analysis typically follows the generalisation Pocock describes, of what was modern to eighteenth-century minds.

I believe we can further anchor Berman's reference to a veritable collapse between the seventeenth century and the eighteenth century by providing some historical context. In the seventeenth century, the restoration of the English, Irish, and Scottish monarchies, facilitated in the Convention Parliament and the Cavalier Parliament (meeting from April to December 1660) brought about legislation that conceptually forced unity: the Clarendon Code and the Corporation Act (1661) and the Act of Uniformity (1662) preceded the 1688 revolution.[115] Such enterprises ossified concepts, such as the Episcopal Polity of the Established Church. Legislative measures allowed for some degree of dissent: the Act of Toleration in 1689 allowed nonconformists to worship as long as dissenters were registered in the knowledge of the Anglican Church; however, heterodoxy was not officially tolerated—there was still a Blasphemy Act to come in 1697, which made the public proclamation of any non-Trinitarian doctrine illegal.[116] The public expression of any thought incongruous to Trinitarian Christian Doctrine, and the Thirty Nine Articles was officially forbidden until the Doctrine of the Trinity Act in 1813; before this, conventicles (religious assemblies outside the Church of England) were restricted to five or less, and subject to fines (because of the Conventicles Acts 1664,

[115] *Historical Dictionary of Stuart England, 1603–1689*, ed. by Ronald H. Fritze and William b. Robison, (Westport, CT, USA: Greenwood Press, 1996), pp. 452–53.
[116] *Ibid.*, pp. 37, 119.

1670).[117] In the eighteenth century, we see the state extending a measure of tolerance to Christian heterodoxy; the Feather's Tavern Petition of 1772 was concerned with increased relief from subscription to Trinitarian doctrine and the Thirty-Nine Articles. As J.G.A. Pocock describes:

> […F]or more than a century, the issue of the Trinity had been recognised as fundamental to the definition of the church's authority and had given rise to debates in both politics and theology. Not without support from the less Trinitarian within the Church of England, some of those in Dissent from it had agitated not for relief but for actual repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts that excluded them from public office.[118]

Edmund Burke defends the clerical obligations to the Church. In his 1772 *Speech on the Acts of Uniformity*, Burke argues:

> If you will have a religion publicly practices and publicly taught […] you must have a power to say what that religious will be which you will protect and encourage, and to distinguish it by such marks and characteristics as you in your wisdom shall think fit.[119]

Frederick Dryer aptly summarizes Burke's position on subscription: 'On this understanding, burke defended clerical subscription to the articles on considerations of secular contract and secular employment.'[120] We can understand Burke's representation of religion, regarding this issue, as demoting genuine religious belief below the practical

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[117] *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. by E.A. Livingstone, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 490.
[118] Pocock, *Barbarism*, V, p. 290.
[119] Burke, *Acts of Uniformity*, *Writings and Speeches*, Little Brown, VII, p. 17.
[120] Dryer, 'Burke's Religion', p. 204.

necessity of the state and church. In his *Speech on a Bill for the Relief of Protestant Dissenters*, Burke explains: 'The cause of the Church of England […] is included in that of religion, not that of religion in the Church of England'.[121] This is the way in which, as Dryer describes, Burke 'looked upon all churches as merely human associations, administering a purely human jurisdiction'.[122] However, by 1779, the Toleration Act had been amended to demote subscription to scripture and only penalties regarding property remained.[123] We can construe this measured tolerance as a means of preserving the old religious concepts and institutions against the threat of their breaking down in the eighteenth century (as a result of the perceived threat of Deism, and the atheism of the French Revolution, for example). The measured welcoming of religious diversity in the effort to preserve religious establishment is unique to the sweeping repeals of penalties in the nineteenth century: in 1813 and 1829, limited relief for Unitarians and Catholics was passed. It is an opinion held among some scholars that the upheavals of the mid-seventeenth century are responsible for the rise in freethinking, Theism, Deism, Atheism, Socinianism, and other forms of Christian heterodoxy, seen in the eighteenth century.[124] In the eighteenth century, many responded to the rising threat to established faith: in 1705, Charles Gildon's *The Deist's Manual* (1705) carried a warning about the rise in criticism against the church as atheism in practice by those '[…] whose system is

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[121] Edmund Burke, *Speech on a Bill for the Relief of Protestant Dissenters*, in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, 12 vols, (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1901), VII, pp. 21-39, (p. 37).
[122] Dryer, 'Burke's Religion', p. 201.
[123] J. Stephens, 'The London ministers and subscription, 1772-1779', *Enlightenment and Dissent*, I, (1982), pp. 43–71.
[124] Roger D. Lund, *The Margins of Orthodoxy: Heterodox Writing And Cultural Response, 1660–1750*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 14; see also, David Berman, *A History of Atheism in Britain From Hobbes to Russell*, (London: Routledge, 1990), and Christopher Hill, *Religion and Politics in 17th-century England* (Brighton: Harvester, 1986).

Atheism in speculation [...]'.[125] In 1711, the Archbishop, Bishops, and clergy of Canterbury draft *A Representation of the Present State of Religion Among Us, with Regard to the Late Excessive Growth of Infidelity and Heresy and Prophaneness*, which conveys the same anxiety that the concepts ossified by the events of the seventeenth century were under threat by the events of the eighteenth century. The French and American revolutions, the numerous restructurings of the Penal Laws in Ireland (e.g., the property acts of 1703 and 1709 preventing growth of land ownership, the Disenfranchising Act of 1728), and the conduct of the British East India Trading Company exploded conceptual boundaries of nationhood and religious cultural identity. These events conceptually undermined Britain's capacity for imperial influence on a global scale. Edmund Burke's responses to these threats are valuable, because of their global range—in writings and speeches, he responds to all of the events above, and more. His works, as they range across the globe and his lifetime, provide rich resources in terms of what they can reveal about religious culture in eighteenth-century modernity.

As far as my approach to the range of Burke's work, I attempt to engage with a variety of his major, minor, and unfinished publications, as well as a selection of his letters and speeches. Bullard wrestles with the questions inherent in analysing Burke's work: whether the entirety of his parliamentary oratory should be taken into account; more than that, whether it should be taken into account alongside the printed publications; should we wonder about the effectiveness of his persuasion as seen in the reception of his writings, 'or should we concentrate on internal evidence of his rhetorical

[125] Charles Gildon, *The Deist's Manual* (1705) in *British Philosophers and Theologians of the 17th and 18th Centuries*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977), p. 51.

strategies drawn from the texts themselves'?[126] The problems that surround Edmund Burke, his thought and his writings, are the very reasons scholars are compelled to keep returning to his work. He did not author a comprehensive treatise, elucidating a range of official theories; most of his published works were in the form of response to contemporary events and circumstances. The record of his parliamentary speeches is not without its flaws, only a fraction of them were transcribed, documented, and published with Burke's consent; the majority received basic mention by other publications.[127] To retain uniformity with regard to my textual sources, and focus the integrity of my arguments, I chiefly rely on the standard critical editions of Burke's works available in the volumes of *Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke* edited by Paul Langford, *et al.*, as well as the earlier *Correspondence of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke Between the Year 1744 and the period of his decease in 1797*, edited by Charles William, Earl Fitzwilliam and Lieutenant General Sir Richard Bourke, K.C.B., and the original texts made available by Eighteenth Century Collections Online. My proclivity in this study leans in the direction of the last vexation Bullard lists: I will draw my evidence internally from the body of Burke's texts themselves. My methodological approach originates in literary studies, through an interest in a philological close reading of Burke's texts, not entirely removed from the deconstructionist theory of Jacque Derrida: 'There is nothing outside of the text [there is no outside-text; *il n'y a pas de hors texte*]'.[128] My approach is deconstructionist in the following way: 'Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing

[126] Bullard, p. 194.
[127] Paul Langford and L.G. Mitchell address this problem at length in their standard critical editions, for one example, see *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: The French Revolution, 1790-1794*, ed. by Paul Langford, and L.G. Mitchell, 9 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), VIII, p.vii.
[128] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, (Maryland, USA: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), p. 158.

all the strategic and economic resources of subversion from the old structure […]'.[129] That is to say, I utilize the structure of Burke's defence of the traditional and the old to explore the duality of meaning in his texts, and the way his language subverts and contradicts itself.

This thesis does not include an argument that Burke was exclusively a religious philosopher. Indeed, there is a danger in confining Burke's thought to any exclusive category—as R.J. Vincent observes, 'Burke did not count himself a theorist'.[130] In fact, I believe that any definitive categorizations about Burke's thinking run the risk of constraining his thought to conventions of religious theory; if I were to argue Burke definitively as a pluralist, universalist, latent-Catholic, latent-Deist, etc., my approach would be unfruitful. Any focused approach to Burke runs the risk of neglecting some aspect of Burke's thinking; as William Hazlitt indicated in early approaches to Burke: 'to do him justice, it would be necessary to quote all his works; the only specimen of Burke is, all that he wrote'.[131] Because citing all that Burke has written is certainly beyond the scope of this thesis, the closest I can come to considering every word of Burke's works is to attempt to offer a perspective about his work as it is regarded collectively. As no other comprehensive study has been an examination of the range of Burke's work, exclusively, through the lens of his religious thinking, perhaps this thesis offers what is only the beginning of our understanding of Burke's confrontation with religion in modernity.

The procedure of my thesis

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[129] *Ibid.*, p. 24.
[130] R.J. Vincent, 'Edmund Burke and the Theory of International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, 10, (1984), 206–35, (p. 206).
[131] W. Hazlitt, *Eloquence of the British Senate: Being a Selection of the Best Speeches of the Most Distinguished English, Irish, and Scotch Parliamentary Speakers, from the beginning of the Reign of Charles I to the Present time*, 2 vols, II, (London, 1808), in *William Hazlitt, Selected Writings*, ed. by Jon Cook, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 206.

Proceeding chronologically through Burke's *oeuvre*, Chapter 1, 'Melting Religious Solidity: The Early Writings', examines Burke's writings from the 1750s: his *Philosophical Enquiry Into Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757 and 1759) and his *A Vindication of Natural Society* (1756–57). In his early works, Burke's treatment of religion prioritises general sacredness over specific doctrinal claims. This, I argue, carves a pathway for Burke's subsequent treatment of religion throughout his writings.

In the first section of this chapter, my primary focus will be Burke's *Vindication*. Examining Burke's *Vindication* against a historical framework of the evolution of religious concepts and institutions in the eighteenth century will enable me to understand the paradoxical implications of Burke's use of irony. I argue that the account of religion that Burke offers in this early text replaces religion proper with religious instinct. I argue that this stance, not wholly unique to Burke, stems from early Enlightenment thought (specifically, Montesquieu), and the eighteenth-century anti-Deist polemic. However, I also argue that the language Burke employs in a veritable crusade to preserve established Christianity is pregnant with attributes contrary to the enterprise.

In the second section of this chapter, I will argue that Burke's emphasis on 'awe' in his *Enquiry* resonates with ideologies potentially antithetical to an Anglican message—for example, Deistic themes, non-God-centred themes, and even themes not associated with holiness (i.e. the profane). I argue that his expanded representation of awe (inclusive of religious and non-religious awe) presents a potential paradox underlying his texts that champion the Christian foundation. By suggesting that Burke's argument for the preservation of solid institutions (e.g. established Christianity) is undermined by his rhetorical engagement with ideologies contrary to them, I demonstrate how Burke's

language in these texts resonates with the modern condition described by Marshall Berman: 'a world where everything is pregnant with its contrary'.[132] In doing so, I intend to understand the way in which religious ideas are represented in Burke's early texts in the context of eighteenth-century modernity, an era wherein—as Zygmunt Bauman suggests—solids '[…] were already rusty, mushy, coming apart at the seams […]'.[133] I demonstrate how Burke's representation of religious ideas prefigures conditions in modernity described by Terry Eagleton, Paul Heelas, Phillip Blond, and John Milbank. In doing so, I begin to reveal Burke as one of the originators of modern religious understanding. I argue that these two early publications in Burke's *oeuvre* demonstrate the beginning of a slow (albeit sometimes unwitting) melting of religious solidity; they mark the beginning of Burke's re-imagining of religion in the context of modernity.

Chapter 2, 'Religious culture struggle in the shifting sands of modernity: the writings on India and Ireland', examines Burke's writings from the 1770s and 1780s. With the objective of examining Burke's anti-exclusionary approach to indigenous religious governance, Chapter 2 of my thesis first will be an examination of Burke's Indian writings: his writings on India: Madras and Bengal (1774–85) and the Launching of the Hastings Impeachment (1786–88). I intend to show how, in these texts, Burke moves beyond a Latitudinarian commitment to limited religious toleration, as represented by the measurements of toleration contemporary to him. Toleration denotes a measure of forbearance and sufferance over something disapproved. I believe Burke's thinking on religion transcends toleration. I believe Burke displays something closer to multiculturalism—an embracing of difference.

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[132] Marshall Berman, p. 22.
[133] Bauman, p. 3.

Second, I show how Burke's multicultural approach to indigenous religious governance in India resonates with his treatment of Catholic emancipation in his Irish writings: his *Tracts relating to Popery Laws* (1765), the *Letter to Lord Kenmare* (1782), his *Letter To Sir Hercules Langrishe: The Roman Catholics Of Ireland* (1792), and the *Second letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe on the Catholic Question*, (1795). I argue that the writings concerning Ireland and India display a very modern struggle to promote local cultural religious identities while shaping international polity.

Finally, I will show that Burke's religious language in these texts reveals some difficulties that resonate with the modern condition, in which concepts of cultural rootedness are destabilized. Scholars of modernity like Zygmunt Bauman and Jonathan Israel use the term *Kulturkampf* (literally, 'culture struggle') to discuss this kind of cultural complication particular to the modern condition.[134] Bauman writes of a *Kulturkampf* of the Nation-state, a 'state-supervised *Kulturkampf*'; Israel writes of a 'vast *Kulturkampf* between traditional, theologically sanctioned ideas about Man, God, and the universe'.[135] The writings in which Burke approaches imperial practice over indigenous religious governance both address and display a *kulturkampf* that resonates with both usages. I argue that in Burke the modern paradox is manifested: he struggles with reassembling that which is constantly disassembled.

Departing from critical interpretations that insist on emphasizing Burke's Catholic connections, his reactionary characteristics, or over-estimate his liberalism, I suggest that Burke's emphasis on the primacy of the religious instinct over any particular religious dogma undermines such categorization.

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[134] Oxford English Dictionary, '*Kulturkampf*', <http://www.oed.com/>, [October 1st, 2011].
[135] Bauman, p. 173; Israel, p. 14.

Chapter 3, ‘‘Profaning of the Sacred: Burke’s confrontation with the French Revolution, *Reflections*’, is an examination of Burke’s position on the rebellion in France. In keeping with following his chronological evolution, Chapter 3 of my thesis focuses on Burke’s *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790); it secondarily leans on his *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* (1791) and *Thoughts on French Affairs* (1791). There is a wealth of scholarship focusing on Burke’s political account(s) surrounding the French Revolution (as we will see from Richard Bourke, James Conniff, F.P. Lock, J.C.D. Clark, etc.).[136] However, I believe that scholarly interpretations of Burke’s response to the French Revolution would benefit from more attention to his religious thought, and its silhouette against evolving modernity. My critical interpretation in this third chapter fills a need to understand more about his religious thinking in the above texts—beyond Burke’s own religious convictions. Mainly, my interpretation of the above texts engages with the idea that, when Burke comes to consider religious sacredness with regard to the events in France, he seems to acknowledge that the sacred harbours its opposite—the demonic, the sacrilegious. My focus on the demonic characteristic of Burke’s representation of religious themes confines my reading (chiefly) to the first part of *Reflections*. While my objective is to unearth the sacrilegious characteristics of this text, I do not wish to implicate the *Reflections* as an atheistic text. S.J. Barnett explains that the idea of an atheist underground movement in the Enlightenment holds little merit; therefore:

[136] Bourke, ‘Theory and Practice: The French Revolution in Political Judgement’; James Conniff, *The Useful Cobbler*: *Edmund Burke and the Politics of Progress*, (Albany, New York: State of New York Press, 1994).

> […] a texts' notoriety for atheism or atheistic tendencies should not be understood as a necessary indicator of its potential or actual influence, but rather or equally as an indicator of its highly unusual and unrepresentative nature, and as a product of fashionable scandal mongering.[137]

Barnett also explains that the reports of pervasive atheism were exaggerated; they were basically 'scare mongering tactics of apologists, the enjoyment of scandal and the titillation of the forbidden […]'.[138] I would like to suggest that Burke's *Reflections* operates in this tradition: Burke is titillated by the evil characterization of his antagonists, and ventriloquizes the very evil he admonishes. I would like to elaborate on this observation made by Samuel Kenrick to Revd James Wodrow in a letter, dated 20–21 April 1791: 'I look upon Burke […] as co-operating with all his able antagonists in bringing forwards the great work of improvement.'[139] Kenrick's observation in the eighteenth century was thanks for advertising the cause of the rational dissenters (e.g. the Reverend Price), but also resonates with Burke's rhetorical function of acting as ventriloquist for his antagonists.

First, I will expand on the observation made by the editors of the Langford edition to the text, that Burke constructs a 'diabolid' of his enemies.[140] I will first examine *Reflections* to highlight the way in which Burke exalts a theme of the demonic, and renders all Christian heterodoxy homogenous. The demonic has an overbearing presence in Burke's *Reflections* alongside themes of holiness and sacredness. For this reason

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[137] Barnett, p. 32.
[138] *Ibid.*, p. 214.
[139] As cited in Martin Fitzpatrick, 'The Enlightenment, politics and providence: some Scottish and English comparisons', in *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by Knud Haakonssen, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 64–100, (p. 92).
[140] L.G. Mitchell, 'Introduction to *Reflections*', in *Writings*, IV, p. 8.

(along with others), the second task of this chapter will be to argue against J.C.D. Clark's interpretation of the *Reflections*, which suggests Burke's *Reflections* does not evince outrage toward sacrilege, arguing Burkes 'outrage at the seizure of the goods of the French church was outrage at theft, not sacrilege'.[141] I counter Clark on this point: I believe the outrage Burke expresses over the encroachment upon religious sacredness is central to Burke's commentary in the *Reflections*, his *Letter to a Member*, and his *Thoughts on French Affairs*.[142] However, I believe his defence of religious sacredness reveals a provocative dimension in his conceptualization of religion—wherein the permanency of 'holiness' shares equal importance with the permanency of the 'profane'.[143] The third task of this chapter is to demonstrate the themes of darkness and evil underlying Burke's defence against sacrilege in the *Reflections*, along with his *Letter to a Member* and his *Thoughts on French Affairs*. I then argue against interpretations of Burke's *Reflections* as reactionary (from J.W. Burrow, Russell Kirk, Terry Eagleton, Stephen K. White, Bruce Frohnen, and others) by highlighting his value of change (as evidenced through the lens of his religious thought)—change being antithetical to reactionary-Conservatism. [144] I argue against these interpretations by demonstrating the

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[141] J.C.D. Clark, Introduction to Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 26.

[142] 'The crime or sin of stealing of misappropriating what is consecrated to God's service. In the ecclesiastical use, extended to include any kind of outrage on consecrated persons or things, and the violation of any obligation having a sacramental character, or recognized as under the special protection of the Church.' Oxford English Dictionary, 'sacrilege', <http://www.oed.com/>, [August 3rd, 2012].

[143] 'Dedicated or consecrated to God or a religious purpose; sacred', Oxford English Dictionary, 'holy', <http://www.oed.com/>, [August 3rd, 2012]. 'Not relating or devoted to what is sacred or biblical', unconsecrated, secular, lay, civil, as distinguished from ecclesiastical […] Freq. contrasted with sacred', Oxford English Dictionary, 'profane', <http://www.oed.com/>, [August 3rd, 2012].

[144] J.W. Burrow, *Whigs and Liberals Continuity and Change in English Political Thought, The Carlyle Lectures, 1985*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 37; Russel Kirk's interpretation on the *Reflections* as a decidedly reactionary text in his and Roger Scruton's *Edmund Burke: A Genius Reconsidered* (Syracuse, N.J.: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2009), other similar interpretations: Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'Ireland, Circumstances, Anti-communism', *in Edmund Burke: Appraisals and Applications*, ed. by Daniel Ritchie,

progressiveness of Burke's religious thinking in the *Reflections*: for example, he reveals the version of religious tolerance upheld by the Revolutionary Society and the National Assembly to be exclusive and, therefore, tyrannous.

Finally, I demonstrate how this irreligious dimension in Burke's representation of religion resonates with twentieth-century theories of modernity. Burke's engagement with dark, demonic themes in the defence of the sacred reveals a paradox akin to the modern 'profaning of the sacred', coined by Karl Marx and applied to modernism by Zygmunt Bauman.[145] I argue that Burke's religious conception resonates with deconstructionist conceptualizations of religion as trans-religious, or religion without religion (as we shall see from Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault).[146]

Chapter 4, 'Burke and science: *Letter to a Noble Lord* and *Letters on a Regicide Peace*', is an examination of the very late writings in Burke's life, wherein I consider Burke's confrontation with scientific development in Enlightenment modernity and what that reveals about his religious thinking. The Burke I wish to explore in this final chapter is facing the frenzied pace of evolving modernity. Specifically in his *Letter to a Noble Lord* (1796) and his *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1796, 1797), Burke addresses the rapid erosion of ossified concepts and establishments by referring to differing branches of science as a metaphor.[147] Simon Schaffer offers valuable insight on Burke's confrontation

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(New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1990), pp. 161–83, (p. 178); Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 42; White, p. 83; Canavan, *Political Reason*, p. 163; Frohnen, p. 9; Gibbons, p. 10.

[145] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (1848), (Middlesex, UK: The Echo Library, 2009), p. 8; Marshall Berman, p. 89.

[146] As cited above: Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell;* Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*; Foucault, *Religion and Culture*.

[147] Edmund Burke, *Letter to a Noble Lord* (1796), in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, Part I: The Revolutionary War, 1794-1797, Part II: Ireland, 1794-1797*, ed. by Paul Langford, R.B. McDowell, and William B. Todd, 9 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), IX, pp. 145–86; *First letter on a Regicide Peace, On the Overtures of Peace* (1796), *Ibid.*, pp. 187–263*; Second Letter on a Regicide Peace, Genius*

with science in his *Letter to a Noble Lord*, and what it reveals about the role of 'genius' in the Enlightenment.[148] I believe I can complement Schaffer's work offering additional context to Burke's references to science in his *Letter to a Noble Lord* as well as in his *Letters on a Regicide Peace*; further, my contribution will offer an interpretation of what these references reveal about Burke's thinking on religion.

First, I grapple with the problems inherent in placing Burke in a scientific context. Second, I focus on Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord*; I delve into the context of Burke's application of various scientific metaphors. I observe how Burke's references align him with classical scientific pathology against the new sect of experimenters who perpetuate thinking that is destructive to religious establishment. Then, I argue that the way in which Burke criticizes an emerging culture of scientific experimenters (in the same text, as well as his *Letters on a Regicide Peace*) reveals a conception of religion that resonates with twenty-first century theorists of modernity. In particular, Mark. C. Taylor interprets religion in modernity through an early branch of science: alchemy. Taylor writes that alchemy 'burns away polluting differences and returns the many to the one in which they all originate'.[149] Historically, as a precursor to the science of chemistry, alchemy is 'the branch of study and practical craft in the medieval and early renaissance period concerned with the nature and transformation of physical substances […]'; figuratively,

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and Character of the French Revolution (1796), *Ibid.*, pp. 264–95; *Third Letter on a Regicide Peace, Proposals for Peace* (1797), *Ibid.*, pp. 296–388*;* and *Fourth Letter on a Regicide Peace, To the Earl Fitzwilliam* (1795 / 97), *Ibid.*, pp. 44–118.

[148] Simon Schaffer, 'Genius in Romantic Natural Philosophy, in *Romanticism and the Sciences*, ed. by Andrew Cunningham and Nicholas Jardine, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1990), pp. 82–98; Simon Schaffer, 'States of Mind: Enlightenment and Natural Philosophy', in *The Languages of Psyche: Mind and Body in Enlightenment Thought*, ed. G. S. Rousseau, (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 233–90.

[149] Mark C. Taylor, 'Terminal Faith', in *Religion, Modernity, and Postmodernity*, ed. by Paul Heelas, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), pp. 36–54, (p. 39, 40).

alchemy can mean: 'to treat, produce, or transform by (*or as if by*) alchemy […]'.[150] However, more importantly for understanding Burke's thinking on religion when he encounters science, alchemy (like Taylor's description, which refers to religion in modernity) finds or renders a common element from differing elements. I argue that Burke's conception of religion resonates with theories of religion in modernity that refer to alchemy to describe the condition of modern religions—for example, we will see him refer to the strength in an 'aggregate' of faiths, '[a]t bottom, these are all the same' all 'derived from the same sources'.[151]

I then explain the way in which *Letters on a Regicide Peace* do not communicate an opposition to science, but rather an opposition to the sort of thinking that disavows repercussions through humanity for the sake of experiment—the misuse of scientific thinking. Finally, I demonstrate how translating Burke's religious conceptualization through the concept of alchemy appropriates his religious thinking in the context of modernity. I believe that we can think of Burke as conceptually contributing to what modern theorists of religion understand as trans-national societies based in multicultural communities.[152]

Ultimately, my thesis is a re-imagination of Burke as a contributor to modern religious conceptualization, which transcends things such as nation, sect, and even good

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[150] '[…] the transmutation of baser metals into gold; the physical and chemical transformation of metals and other substances performed by practitioners of this craft', Oxford English Dictionary, 'alchemy' <http://www.oed.com/>, [September 1st, 2012].

[151] Burke, *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*, *Writings*, IX, p. 248.

[152] As we will see from Susanne Hoeber Rudolph's, 'Introduction Religion, States, and Transnational Civil Society', and 'Dehomogenizing Religious Formations' in *Transnational Religions and Fading States*, ed. by Susanne Rudolph-Hoeber and James Piscatori, (Colorado, USA: Westview Press, 1997), pp. 1–26; 243–60, and Hoeber Rudolph's, 'Religious Concomitants of Transnationalism: From a Universal Church to a Universal Religiosity', in *The Sacred and the Sovereign: Religion and International Politics*, ed. by John D. Carlson and Erik C. Owens, (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003), pp. 139–53.

and evil. I wish to offer an interpretation of Burke as an open-minded proponent of change and adaptability, where his representation of religion is concerned. I believe this interpretation of Burke, through his representation of religion, counterbalances interpretations of him as the reactionary father of Conservatism.

Ch. 1: 'Melting Religious Solidity: The Early Writings'

Introduction

The first chapter of my thesis is an interpretation of Burke's early writings: his *A Vindication of Natural Society* (1756–57) his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), and his *Account of the European Settlements in America* (written with William Burke, published in 1757). My interpretation of these early writings fills the need to understand Burke's religious thought in these texts, in the context of Enlightenment modernity. Those critical interpretations of these early texts that do lightly broach a religious context for Burke's thinking (as we shall see from Francis Canavan, Bruce Frohnen, Terry Eagleton, Ian Hampshire-Monk, and Stephen K. White), do so in a way that enrols Burke in anti-progressive, anti-Enlightenment, anti-modern, Christ-centred thought—each respectively contributing to the branding of Burke as the reactionary founder of modern Conservatism. I believe the reason for Burke's reactionary branding comes from a lack of attention to his expanded conceptualization of global religious practice, and a lack of attention to his conceptual relativism about religious cultural legitimacy—of non-Christ-centred religions, and even non-God-centred thinking. My reading of these early texts is intended to remedy this lack of attention.

First, I will outline a framework of theories on modernity, which I argue aptly articulates the complexities in Burke's religious representations. I believe the vocabulary of David Hume, J.G.A. Pocock, Zygmunt Bauman, Marshall Berman, John D. Carlson and Erik C. Owens helps define the conception of modernity and religious culture in the Enlightenment era. I argue that these early publications in Burke's *oeuvre* demonstrate

the beginning of a slow (albeit sometimes unwitting) melting of religious solidity in order to adapt to the changing context of modernity. I then make a case for the need to think of Burke beyond the narrow view of him as a Christ-centred Conservative. For example, Francis Canavan portrays Edmund Burke as a 'Christian Statesman', and argue that Burke would have solved any religious division in his family (between his Catholic mother and Protestant father) 'by minimizing the theological differences among various Christian churches'.[153] I argue that such narrow interpretations of Burke as only a Christian-Conservative thinker underestimate his engagement with non-Christ-centred thinking, and his minimization of the role of a Godhead in religious legitimacy (before he becomes a statesman, incidentally). Also before looking closely at the early writings, I will give some biographical and historical context to the publication of the texts.

The first text I will examine is Burke's *Vindication*, in which I observe the way Burke begins to promote religion as a general necessity. I argue that Burke's representation of religion in his *Vindication* values it in terms of social utility and a legitimacy relative to indigenous culture first and genuine religious belief and doctrinal claims second. This, I will show, paves the way for what will become the basis of Burke's subsequent representation of religion throughout his writings: the demotion of religious difference, and the expansion of the conceptions surrounding religion. I argue this by evincing Burke as an upholder of early Enlightenment thought, by demonstrating that his conceptualization of religion in the *Vindication* follows that of Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu. Other critical interpretations of Burke have located the roots of his political thought, or his thinking on history, in the work of Montesquieu (as

[153] Canavan, 'Edmund Burke: Christian Statesman', para. 1.

we shall see from C.P. Courtney and Ian McBride). However, I wish to argue that we can also locate Burke's early thinking on religion in the work of Montesquieu.

I will then examine Burke's *Enquiry*. While many studies have expertly analysed the *Enquiry* for its aesthetic and political thinking (as we will see from Terry Eagleton, Paddy Bullard, and Richard Bourke), few analyse the text for the value of Burke's religious thinking. Some (like Bourke) even argue against focusing on the text in a religious context. To complement, yet differ from, these interpretations, I wish to understand the way religious ideas are represented in this text. In the *Enquiry*, I argue that Burke engages with thinking that is antithetical to Christ-centred Protestant thinking (e.g., Deistic, non-Christian, and even non-God-centred thinking). I argue that any God-centred or Christ-centred message is reliant on (and, perhaps subverted by) his expanded representation of God, his shades of Deism, and his softening of boundaries between (to use Burke's terminology) 'the sacred and profane'.[154] For the purposes of this thesis, we will understand 'sacred' to mean consecrated or 'dedicated to some religious purpose', and 'profane' to mean 'unconsecrated, secular'.[155] I will also show that, in the *Enquiry*, we can (like the *Vindication*) see a demotion of genuine religious belief, and further see a

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[154] This chapter will later discuss Burke's use of these terms, for example the passage that reads: 'It were endless to enumerate all the passages both in the sacred and profane writers, which establish the general sentiment of mankind, concerning the inseparable union of a sacred and reverential awe, with our ideas of the divinity.' Edmund Burke, *A philosophical enquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful. The fourth edition. With an introductory discourse concerning taste, and several other additions. To which is added, a vindication of natural society, after the manner of a late noble writer, by the same author*, (Dublin, 1766), Eighteenth Century Collections Online, [accessed 16 January 2009]; Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry Into Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: The early writings*, ed. by T.O. McLoughlin, Paul Langford, James, T. Boulton, and William B. Todd, 9 vols, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), I, pp. 185-320, (p. 240).

[155] 'sacred', c. 1412-20—1885, Oxford English Dictionary, also 'holy', c. 825—1850, 'sacred from human profanation or defilement', <http://www.oed.com/>, [August 3rd, 2012]; 'Not relating or devoted to what is sacred or biblical, unconsecrated, secular, lay, civil, as distinguished from ecclesiastical […] Freq. contrasted with sacred', Oxford English Dictionary, 'profane', c. 1474—1997, <http://www.oed.com/>, [August 3rd, 2012].

removal of a Godhead as a necessity altogether. I argue that these characteristics of expanded religious thinking begin to show evidence of Burke's progressiveness, and even his openness to non-Christian thinking.

I then argue that the condition of Burke's conception of religion is reflective of the modernization of religious conception in the Enlightenment era (e.g., the rise of Deism and Christian-heterodox thinking; notions of God expanded until rendering the notion unnecessary). I further argue that we can understand the condition of Burke's religious conception in these early texts by articulating it through the vocabulary of theorists of modernity, such as: Marshall Berman, Terry Eagleton, Paul Heelas, Phillip Blond, and John Milbank.

Finally, I turn to Burke's *Account*, a text in which I argue we can see an even more expanded conception of religion(s). In the *Account*, I argue that Burke acknowledges the relative cultural legitimacy of non-Christian religions, and an even more expanded representation of God than we see in the *Enquiry*. Ultimately, I argue that these early texts demonstrate how Burke's conception of religion begins to soften religious particularities. I argue that the way in which religious ideas are represented in these early texts begins to (to use Burke's words) blend and harmonize the colours of religious definitions.[156]

The Framework of modernity; understanding Burke beyond Christ-centred Conservatism; some background for the publications

In the introduction to this thesis, through the work of J.G.A. Pocock, I defined the parameters of modernity in terms of historical perception for eighteenth-century minds.

[156] Burke, *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*, *Writings*, IX, p. 248.

In the interest of fortifying this version of modernity that serves my analysis of Burke, I will now elaborate on what theorists (those contemporary to Burke, those who write about Burke, and those who write on modernity at large) assert as the conditions of modernity. If we look again at Hume's *Essays Moral, Political, and Literary*, we see a number of conditions he ascribes to modern times. Where religious conceptualization is concerned, he writes about the difference in religious zealotry from ancient to modern times:

> Sects of philosophy, in the ancient world, were more zealous than parties of religion; but in modern times, parties of religion are more furious and enraged than the most cruel factions that ever arose from interest and ambition.[157]

The religious zealotry found in the modernity of the eighteenth century (Hume's and Burke's time) is far more furious than found in ancient sects of philosophy. We will see later (in Chapters 2 and 3) how Burke denounces this same zealotry of modern times. Above, Hume suggests that factions of religion are more dangerous than factions arising from interest. Pocock engages with a different passage from Hume's *Essays*, wherein Hume explains political parties founded on interest and speculation as a feature of modern times:

> Parties from *principle*, especially abstract speculative principle, are known only to modern times, and are, perhaps the most extraordinary and unaccountable phenomenon, that has yet appeared in human affairs.[158]

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[157] Hume, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, I, p. 133.
[158] *Ibid.*,p. 130.

In Chapter 3, we will also see how Burke denounces the modern feature of parties founded on abstract speculation. However, for now, it is worth pausing to know what Pocock warns about the above passage:

> In reading this sentence, we must beware of the persistent ambiguities of the term "modern". If we take it in its Enlightened and post-ecclesiastical sense, "abstract speculative principle", will seem to denote ideologies of political, social and historical belief, the new fanaticism which Burke was to denounce in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*. […] But to understand what he [Hume] was saying in 1741–2, it may be necessary to resort to the older usage which employed 'modern' to denote the post-ancient […].[159]

This agrees with the parameters of modernity set up in the introduction: *modern* indicates *post-ancient*. Pocock explains why, as in the passage above, Hume recognizes post-ancient features such as zealous religious factions as dangerous:

> We have collided suddenly with the deepest challenge posed to itself by the Enlightened mind. On the one hand, Hume is proclaiming its belief that differences in religious dispute are utterly without consequences for practical behaviours, because they are about propositions which are not merely insoluble, not merely unintelligible, but consequently about nothing at all. […] On the other hand, like it or not, 'modern' human beings do divide on the basis of these convictions. […] Given the axiom that religious distinctions are utterly without meaning [according to

[159] Pocock, *Barbarism*, II, pp. 191–92.

> Hume], it has to be explained why human beings continue to invest them with meaning, […] There is possible social pathology, an explanation of how human minds become obsessed with the unmeaning.[160]

When I analyse Burke's *Vindication* in this chapter (and also later in Chapter 3 of this thesis), I will suggest that there is something anti-foundational, or deconstructionist, in his defence of religious establishment: protecting religious establishment from enquiry that would deconstruct it, is to become obsessed with its unmeaning; to attack the enemies of religious establishment is to give a voice to the enemies; to so fervently announce the need to protect religious establishment is to admit its precarious, easily disintegrated, nature. From Hume and Pocock above, we can understand a framework of complexity and paradox in religious conception as being characteristic of the modern Enlightenment mind. I argue that the signature of this paradox in the Enlightenment mind is also found in more recent theories on modernity. Marshall Berman's conceptualization of modernity, for example, exhibits the same kind of challenge to the modern mind as Hume and Pocock do above:

> To be modern is to live a life of paradox and contradiction. […] It is to be both revolutionary and conservative: alive to new possibilities for experience and adventure, frightened by the nihilistic depths to which so many modern adventures lead, longing to create and to hold on to something real even as everything melts. We might even say that to be fully modern it to be anti-modern […] it has been impossible to grasp and embrace the modern world's potentialities without loathing and fighting

[160] Pocock, *Barbarism*, II, pp. 192–93.

> against some of its most palpable realities. […] the deepest modern seriousness must express itself through irony.[161]

Berman's summary contributes to the formation of a framework of modernity, from which I draw a vocabulary to interpret Burke's Enlightenment mind. For example, in this chapter I will demonstrate that Burke's representation of religion is traditional (arguably, anti-modern) in his fear of the potential anarchic tyrannous depths of sects less prohibitive of reason (e.g., Deism and Atheism). Yet, Burke's representation is modern, inasmuch as he is alive to expanded conceptualizations of God and the relative cultural legitimacy of non-Christian sects. Burke also communicates his deepest, most serious, concerns about modernity as Berman describes above—through irony.

It is fair to use Berman's work to enrich our understanding of Burke in the context of modernity. There are instances wherein he uses same post-feudal, post-ancient generalisation to conceive of modernity; therefore, we can conceive of Berman as agreeing with the precedent of eighteenth-century modernity established (through Hume and Pocock) in the introduction. Berman describes a sort of crescendo of modernity, beginning in the sixteenth century and renewing in the eighteenth century:

> [F]rom the start of the sixteenth century to the end of the eighteenth, people were just beginning to experience modern life […] Our second phase begins with the great revolutionary wave of the 1790s. With the French Revolution and its reverberations, a great modern public abruptly and dramatically comes to life. This public shares the feeling of living in a revolutionary age, an age that generates explosive upheavals in every

[161] Marshall Berman, p. 14.

> dimension of personal, social and political life.[162]

Jonathan Israel describes a similar crescendo: in 1650–80, he points to a 'transition or crisis of European mind'; he then suggests a 'mental world revolutionized' by 1680-1750.[163] The dimensions of Berman's analysis of modern life include religion: 'Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, or religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity […]'.[164] Indeed, I think the dimension of religion most aptly exemplifies the paradoxical nature of modernity: the sacred is subverted by the profane, diffused into a secular conceptualization by demoting the importance of genuine religious belief. This chapter will demonstrate this modern paradox in Burke's early writing, through his understanding that, for its own interest, a state should not impinge on religious sacredness. John D. Carlson and Erik C. Owens capture the particular paradoxical unity of early modernity:

> [W]orries over the commingling of church and state; trepidation about oppressive theocracies and militant fundamentalisms; and worst-case scenarios—of crusades or wars of religion […] These were the ghastly spirits that modern secular politics, beginning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, so arduously sought to exorcise.[165]

Essentially, Carlson and Owens explain that the steps taken to avoid the religious warfare and oppression that characterized the medieval era could be construed as the

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[162] *Ibid.*, p. 17.
[163] Israel, p. xlvii.
[164] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[165] John D. Carlson and Erik C. Owens, *The Sacred and the Sovereign: Religion and International Politics*, ed. by John D. Carlson and Erik C. Owens, (Washington, D.C.: George Washington University Press, 2003), p. 1.

secularization of politics, or the germination of the fracture between religion and politics.

> Whereas in the medieval archetype of sovereignty religion is the unifying principle of political authority, in the modern archetype religion is understood to be a divisive and destructive force among political communities. […] The religiopolitical unity of medieval Christendom, though never complete, fractured decisively by the early sixteenth century with the emergence of the Protestant Reformation […] Religious freedom and the effort to throw off religious coercion became central to the formation of separate states whose citizens were free to believe and practice the state's religion.[166]

This analysis of the condition of religion in modernity from Carlson and Owens follows the same post-ancient, post-feudal generalisation used by the other theorists above, and (according to Pocock) Enlightenment minds: medieval unity (while tolerant of measured religious differences within Trinitarian Christianity) was drawn from the sovereign principle of political authority; the unity of post-Reformation modernity is different, inasmuch as it is drawn from the sovereign freedom to be dis-unified, the sovereignty of one's right to 'throw off religious coercion'. This follows Hume's theory that religious fracturing is a feature of modernity.

The encapsulation of the modern sacred cultivated by Carlson and Owens is useful for framing a discussion about the modern sacred, as it will be conceived of for Burke in this chapter, and throughout my thesis:

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[166] Carlson and Owens, p. 14; The historical role of religion and sovereignty in governments is presented in depth by Daniel Engster, *Divine Sovereignty: The Origins of Modern State Power*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001); see also Daneil Philpott, *Revolutions in Sovereignty: How Ideas Shaped Modern Institutions*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001).

> In various moments and movements, the sacred refers to that which is holy, sublime, universal, or true […] Yet the sacred rarely is severed entirely from earthly concerns; ethical and religious norms of belief and conduct usually flow outward, placing upon believers a sense of awe or a feeling of dread that inspires allegiance and obedience, in this world to such norms.[167]

This brings us back to Berman's modernity. Berman observes that Marx (in his *Communist Manifesto*) confronts 'this realm [modernity] with mixed emotions, awe and elation fused with a sense of horror'.[168] This chapter will show that Burke's conceptualization of 'awe' is characteristic of this condition of modernity—described by Carlson, Owens, and Berman (Marx), above: awe drawn from both holy and profane sources can be (relatively) legitimate, and therefore, sacred.

Another condition of modernity that we find in agreement in older theories of modernity (circa nineteenth century), as well as more recent ones (circa twentieth century), is the idea of solidity in the conception of social frameworks. For a nineteenth-century example, let us consider Alexis de Tocqueville's interpretation of the *ancien regime*:

> The nobility had been the first class in the kingdom, and had enjoyed undisputed greatness for so many centuries, that it had acquired a high-

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[167] Carlson and Owens, p. 7.
[168] Marshall Berman, pp. 101, 120; see also R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred*, (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), p. 28; Gerard Clarke and Michael Jennings, *Development, Civil Society and Faith-Based Organizations: Bridging the Sacred and the Secular*, ed. by Gerard Clarke, (Hampshire: Pelgrave Macmillon, 2008), and also David Jasper, *The Sacred and Secular Canon in Romanticism: Preserving the Sacred Truths*, (Hampshire: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1999).

> mindedness, a self-reliance, a sense of responsibility, which rendered it the most solid portion of the social frame.[169]

Below, Zygmunt Bauman carries de Tocqueville's observation into the twentieth century:

> When reading de Tocqueville's *Ancien Régime*, one might wonder in addition to what extent the "found solids" were resented, condemned and earmarked for liquefaction for the reason that they were already rusty, mushy, coming apart at the seams and altogether unreliable. Modern times found the pre-modern solids in a fairly advanced state of disintegration […] The first solids to be melted and the first sacreds to be profaned were traditional loyalties, customary rights and obligations which bound hands and feet, hindered moves and cramped enterprise.[170]

Bauman focuses on the melting of solid concepts and institutions in the context of economics.[171] I believe we can also conceive of the profaning of traditional loyalties and customary rights in a religious context. We shall see throughout this thesis how Burke laments the destruction of the (to use de Tocqueville's words) 'solid portion of the social frame', which I argue refers not only to the nobility and the *ancien regime*, but religious establishment as well.

When thinking about the state of solid institutions in eighteenth-century modernity, Bruce Frohnen also looks to de Tocqueville, as paired with Burke, to outline

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[169] Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the Revolution*, trans. by John Bonner, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1856), p. 140.
[170] Bauman, p. 3.
[171] Bauman, p. 4, 8; Frank Turner also mentions a connection between Burke and Tocqueville. Frank. M. Turner, 'Introduction Edmund Burke: The Political Actor Thinking', in *Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. by Frank M. Turner, (London: Yale University Press, 2003), pp, xii-xli, (p. xli).

'arguments for the conservative good life'.[172] Frohnen acknowledges a religious context in Burke's thought. However, like Stephen K. White and Jane Hodson, Frohnen limits this appreciation to Burke's confrontation with the French Revolution. Moreover, Frohnen's engagement with Burke's thought in a religious context is limited to only a Christian context; like Canavan, Frohnen makes the virtue of Christian subordination to God's will synonymous with concepts of anti-Enlightenment Conservatism.[173] Indeed, Frohnen's main objective concerns situating Burke as the 'founder of modern Conservatism'.[174] Frohnen's study of Conservatism (as stemming from Burke and de Tocqueville) is aligned with other works that evince Burke's anti-Enlightenment Conservatism through utilitarian interpretations: John MacCunn, sees Burke as anticipating the Conservative Utilitarianism of Bentham; Alfred Cobban also sees Burke as a utilitarian; Lewis Namier examines Burke's reactionary qualities in terms of a utilitarian response from an out-of-power politician trying to retain political standing.[175] Even authors who recognize Burke's liberal potentiality, still focus on him as a founding pillar of Conservatism: Fredrick A. Dreyer observes Burke following a 'Lockean framework' in terms of respecting the state as an institution with limited power, but still

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[172] Frohnen, p. 9.
[173] Frohnen, p. 9. There is much scholarship on Burke and the concept of virtue: Peter Stanlis, sees Burke's idea of virtue as divine and not intellectual or as proceeding from empirical observations, in *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2003), p. 120, originally published in 1958 by The University of Michigan Press; Seamus Deane believes Burke's conceptualization of virtue echoes Francis Hutchinson's *Enquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1726), p. 23; see also see Stephen H. Browne, *Edmund Burke and the Discourse of Virtue*, (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1993).
[174] Frohnen, p. 9.
[175] John MacCunn, *The political Philosophy of Burke* (London: Edward Arnold, 1913), p. 192, 224; Alfred Cobban, *Edmund Burke and the Revolt against the Eighteenth Century: a study of the political and social thinking of Burke, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1929), p. 46; Lewis Namier, *The Structure of Politics at the Accession of George III*, (London: Macmillan, 1929), p. 236; see also Francis O'Gorman, in *Edmund Burke: His Political Philosophy*.

emphasises Burke as a Conservative, in contrast with John Locke as a liberal.[176] Interpreting Burke as a Conservative, of course, is valid; however, if we understand Conservatism as resisting change (as is common, and as we will see Frohnen does), then I argue more credit needs to be given to Burke's openness toward malleability and change.[177] Frohnen pairs Burke with de Tocqueville, heavily emphasizing the Conservative leanings of both figures by appropriating their political thought into neo-Conservatism. Essentially, the Conservative 'good life' is achieved by submitting to God's will; this, Frohnen explains is virtue:

> To act rightly, to do as God wills in one's own life, is to act virtuously. But one cannot judge by the light of one's independent reason what it is to act rightly. One needs the guidance of revelation (most prominently the Ten Commandments and the golden rule) […].[178]

Frohnen enrols Burke in Christ-centred Conservative thinking; if we accept a very narrow view of Burke's thinking on religion, this classification fits—it was established in the introduction that Burke was a Christian, and this chapter will address how Burke does believe that one's capacity for reason is, in a way, providential. However, such a narrow view ignores the expanded, generalized way in which Burke represents religious themes; it neglects Burke's engagement with non-Christian and non-God-centred ideologies, which this thesis is intended to highlight.

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[176] Fredrick A. Dreyer, *Burke's Politics: A Study of Whig Orthodoxy* (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier, 1979), p. 69; see also C.B. MacPherson, *Burke* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1980).
[177] 'The holding of conservative principles; the tendency to resist great or sudden change, esp. in politics […] the tendency to resist evolutionary change', Oxford English Dictionary, 'conservatism', c. 1832, <http://www.oed.com/>, [September 3rd, 2012].
[178] Frohnen, p. 3.

Frohnen cites the observations of Leo Strauss and Eric Voeglin to convey the travesty of modernity: 'Both men observed that the birth and progress of modernity have been characterized by two interdependent developments: the emergence of a view of politics as the pursuit of secular salvation (the achievement of a materially defined paradise on earth) and the concomitant loss of transcendent standards and goals.'[179] According to Frohnen, this hedonism is linked with political atheism; it resulted from eighteenth-century prophets (e.g., Jean Jacques Rousseau), and was perpetuated by 'its Marxian progeny'.[180] Discussing Burke's position on the influence of Jacobinism and political atheism, brought on the by the French Revolution, Frohnen explains: 'Government, for Burke, should support the more capable guardians of human nature: tradition, manners, prejudice, and the greatest embodiment of all three—religion.'[181] This is true; however, the way in which Burke promotes the preservation of a religious foundation exhibits a paradoxical compliance with the more progressive ideologies of the time, those less prohibitive to reason (e.g. Deism). Further, his prioritization of a religious foundation is not limited to the established church or the *ancien régime*; it is a principle that expands to non-Christian sects, and manifests in his early writings—not just the *Reflections*. Beginning with his *Vindication*, I will unearth Burke's paradoxical assimilation of religions antithetical to Christ-centred Conservatism.

Because of the proximity and quick succession of Burke's early publications, there is not much evidence to contradict thinking about Burke formulating the ideas that

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[179] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[180] *Ibid.*, p. 7, 2; Frohnen refers to Leo Strauss' *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 176–77; Frohnen also looks at Eric Voeglin's, *The New Science of Politics, History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952).
[181] Frohnen, p. 63

supply the *Vindication*, the *Enquiry*, and the *Account*, at or around the same time—as a teenager, maybe even a younger teenager than some scholars suggest (e.g., J.T. Boulton).[182] Burke started at Trinity College, Dublin on 14 April 1744, at the age of fifteen. (This followed his education at a Quaker boarding school in county Kildare from 1741–44). We know that part of Burke's reading as a student would have included Longinus's work on the sublime.[183] Longinus' *Peri Hypsous* was translated by Nicholas Boileau, and made available in 1712; thus, making the emergence of aesthetic theory an eighteenth-century novelty.[184] In the early part of 1747, he writes to his friend Richard Shackleton about his difficulty in procuring the text: 'I could not get e'er a second-hand Longinus, but rather than you should want it I bought a new one.'[185] Therefore, it is conceivable to see Burke thinking about the themes of his *Enquiry* as early as eighteen, for a possible ten years before it was published on 21 April 1757—rather than the seven years J.T. Boulton suggests.[186] Burke would not embark on a political career until 1759, as a secretary to William Hamilton, (MP for Pontefract in Yorkshire), but we can think about Burke conceiving of the ideas on governance, authority, power and terror, which manifest themselves in his early writings, earlier than Stephen K. White suggests. White suggests that the Gordon riots, 1780, would have inspired Burke's thinking about

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[182] J.T. Boulton, *Burke's Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958), p. xv.
[183] D. Wecter, 'The Missing Years in Edmund Burke's Biography', *P.M.L.A.*, LIII (1938), 1102–25; A.P.I. Samuels, *The Early Life, Correspondence, and Writings of the Rt. Hon. Edmund Burke*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923); I believe many regard O'Brien's *Great Melody* as the most nuanced biography of Burke; see also Paul Langford, 'Burke, Edmund (1729/30–1797)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004, [January 19th, 2012].
[184] Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 4.; Nicholas Bolieau, *A Treatise of the Sublime, translated form the Greek of Longinus (Traité du sublime)*, (London: E. Curill, 1712).
[185] 'Letter to Richard Shackleton', (24 January 1747), in *Correspondence of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke Between the Year 1744 and the period of his decease in 1797*, ed. by Charles William, Earl Fitzwilliam and Lieutenant General Sir Richard Bourke, K.C.B., 4 vols, (London: Francis and John Rivington, 1844), II, pp. 109-10, (p. 109); Samuels, p. 100–01.
[186] Boulton, *Burke's Enquiry*, p. xv.

authority and terror; however, during his time as a student, Burke would have been aware of the student riot on the Black Dog prison in Dublin, 21 May 1747.[187] We can further think about Burke's time as a student at Trinity as a very active literary period: the literary Club, the College Historical Society (of which Burke was a part) was founded in the same year (1747). The next year, on 28 January, Burke launched the *Reformer*—a literary magazine edited (and probably wholly written) by Burke.[188] Essentially, his literary activity during this period conceivably accounts for the rapid appearance of three publications in such a short period. He had met his publisher, Robert Dodsley, in 1752; in 1756, the *Vindication* was published (anonymously), and then followed his *Account of the European Settlements in America* (with William Burke) in 1757, and his *Enquiry* (also anonymously) a week later. The chronological closeness of these writings warrants their treatment together in this first chapter, it also validates the drawing of thematic parallels between these texts. (Incidentally, it was also during this same period, in 1750, that he met his wife, Jane Nugent; they were married in the same year that his *Enquiry* was published—just one month before, in March of 1757).

Having delineated that short historical context, many scholars, nevertheless, have observed, 'There is a dearth of information on Burke during the early 1750s. He appears to have suffered some sort of mental breakdown, from which he was nursed back to health in the home of a physician named Christopher Nugent [father of his wife, Jane],' so, in a biographical sense, there is not much possible beyond speculation.[189] So, why return to these early texts repeatedly? I believe that approaching these early writings

[187] Samuels, p. 142–45.
[188] Boulton, *Burke's Enquiry*, p. xx; O'Brien, p. 36.
[189] White, p. 9, O'Brien, p. 22.

again through the lens of religious context can help to remedy the dearth of what we do not know about Burke's thinking (especially what is absent from the young Burke's thinking—what Conor Cruise O'Brien called 'the missing years'); further, understanding Burke's conception of religion from his early writings can lend to our understanding of the conception of religion in Enlightenment modernity.

***Vindication*: Demotion of genuine belief in God**

Ian Hampshire-Monk suggests that by the mid-eighteenth century, the threat of Catholicism in opposition to the established church was giving way to the increasing danger of 'atheists and rational Deists'.[190] Tracing a timeline of particular events into the century can support such a claim. Beginning with the 1688 Protestant victory of the Glorious Revolution, the decline of Jacobitism in particular is marked throughout the century with a series of failed attempts at reclaiming the throne: 1715, 1719, 1745, the defeat of Charles Edward Stuart (Bonnie Prince Charlie, who tried to regain absolute monarchy in Scotland), and finally the 1746 Jacobite defeat at Culloden. In the example of the 1746 defeat, the Jacobite forces were chiefly comprised of Catholic clans from the Scottish Highlands; this illustrates the abatement of a force that was largely Catholic in its composition.

The analysis of Deism as a movement or denomination is a point of dispute among scholars—much like the existence of modernity as a concept or a phenomenon. S.J. Barnett acknowledges a measure of validity for Deism as a mode of thought appearing in some historical sense:

[190] Hampshire-Monk, 'Skeptical Conservatism', p. 237.

> The first hint of deism in the historical record is to be found in sixteenth-century Lyon. In 1563 Pierre Viret, a close colleague of the Protestant reformer Calvin, wrote the *Instruction Chrétienne*, in which he described various freethinkers who needed to be combated. Amongst them Viret mentioned those "*qui s'appelent deists, d'un mot tout nouveau*" ("who call themselves deists, a completely new word") and his description of them heavily emphasized their lack of religion.[191]

I agree with Justin Champion who, like Hampshire-monk, accepts '[t]he intellectual manifestations of this disenchantment of the world […]' as a Deist movement.[192] In terms of this 'movement' being a threat, there is also disagreement. Roy Porter argues that Deists were numerous, but enjoyed general social acceptance.[193] This leads to Barnett's trepidation about acknowledging Deist thought as an actual movement; while there may be evidence of Deist thought in existence, Barnett posits the following: 'It can be asserted, however, that in any meaningful definition of the term, beyond the virtual reality of history books, the deist movement never existed.'[194] There is, perhaps, validity in pointing to the publication of Deistic texts, like John Toland's *Christianity not Mysterious* (1696), as evidencing a rise in freethinking. Toland's work not only introduced the application of reason to the interpretation of biblical doctrines, but also questioned the very divinity (and, therefore, the implicit validity) of biblical doctrines:

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[191] Barnett, p. 11.
[192] Justin Champion, *Republican Learning John Toland and the Crisis of Christian Culture, 1696–1722*, (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. xiv; Barnett, p. 12.
[193] Roy Porter, *Enlightenment Britain and the Creation of the Modern World*, (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2001), pp. 112, 115.
[194] Barnett, p. 13.

> What we discours'd of Reason before, and Revelation now, being duly weigh'd, all the Doctrines and Precepts of the New Testament (if it be indeed Divine) must consequently agree with Natural Reason, and our own Ordinary Ideas.[195]

Anglican Clergyman Jonas Proast denounced Toland's work as heresy, and American Christian Theologian John Edwards denounced it as 'poisonous Socinianism, the enemy of true revelation and of ecclesiastical organization'.[196] A publication in this same year by Whig Minister William Stephens, *An Account of the Growth of Deism in England* (1696), warned that the rise of Deism presented a threat to the established church equal to, or perhaps greater, than that of Catholicism.[197] A few years later, Charles Gildon's *The Deist's Manual* (1705) carried the warning further by classifying the rise in criticism of the church as atheism in practice by those '[…] whose system is Atheism in speculation [...]'.[198] In 1720, Cornelius Nary set out his objections to 'Modern Libertins, Deists, Atheists and Pre-Adamites' of the age in his *New History of the World*.[199] The assessments presented by Stephens, Gildon, and Nary validate perceiving a particular

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[195] John Toland, 'Christianity not Mysterious, of a Treatise Showing that there is Nothing in the Gospel Contrary to Reason, Nor above it: And that no Christian Doctrine can be properly call'd a Mystery' (1696) in *History of British Deism*, (London: Routledge / Thoemmes Press, 1995), p. 46.

[196] Young, p. 27, citing J. Proast, *The Argument of the Letter Concerning Toleration, Briefly Consider'd and Answer'd* (Oxford, 1690); J. Edwards, *Socinianism Unmask'd* (London, 1696).

[197] William Stephens, *An account of the growth of Deism in England* (1696), (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1990).

[198] Gildon, *The Deist's Manual*, p. 51.

[199] Cornelius Nary, *A new history of the world, containing an historical and chronological account of the times and transactions, from the creation to the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ, According to the Computation of the Septuagint; Which the Author manifestly shews to be that of the Ancient Hebrew Copy of the Bible. Together With Chronological Tables at the End of each Age, in which The Lives of the Patriarchs after the Deluge, the Reigns of the Rulers and Kings of the Children of Israel and Juda, are parallel'd (and agree exactly) with those of the Assirian, Babylonian, Persian, Grecian Kings and Roman Emperors: By means whereof all the Objections and Cavils of our Modern Libertins, Deists, Atheists and Pre-Adamites, Who grounding their Arguments and Reasonings upon the Computation of the present Hebrew Text, make the First Kings of the Assirian, Babylonian and Egyptian Monarchies to have Reign'd some Hundreds of Years before the Deluge, are clearly Consulted*., (Dublin: Edward Waters for Luke Dowling, 1720), Eighteenth Century Collections Online, [July 1st 2012].

eighteenth-century climate of concern over the rise in thinking subversive to Christian establishment. We can further construe that defenders of the established church worried about various forms of dissent offering a potentially attractive benefit: freedom from restrictive doctrine. As Brian Young explains:

> The dilution of antidogmatism in the closing decades of the eighteenth century followed on the defection of some of its younger contingent to the new denomination of Unitarianism […] it was the doctrine of the Trinity which was gradually sacrificed by some in favour of intellectual clarity and philosophical rather than theological respectability.[200]

Generally synonymous with Intellectual Unitarianism is the term *rational dissent,* Knud Haakonssen explains: 'Rational Dissent meant the rejection of Calvanism and the denial of the necessity of spiritual regeneration.'[201]

The particular form of dissent with which this chapter is chiefly concerned is Deism; Barnett expertly provides an appropriate definition of Deism which will help to recognize Deistic characteristics in Burke's representation of religious thought later in this chapter:

> Deism, diverse in form and thus difficult to define, has generally been accepted as entailing belief in God an even of *post mortem* rewards and punishments. It was, however, a God usually remote from everyday human concerns. Deists thus dismissed the need for any mediation between humanity and divinity in the form of the Church and dismissed

[200] Young, 11; On this dilution, see also M. Fitzpatrick, 'Latitudinarianism at the Parting of the Ways: A Suggestion', in *The Church of England, c. 1689-1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism*, J. Walsh, C. Haydon, and S. Taylor, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 209–27.
[201] Haakonssen, 'Enlightened Dissent: an introduction', p. 4.

> the Church's claimed mediation as self-interested fraud. This sort of view was understood as a potential threat not only to Christianity, but also to the established social order, for Christian teachings and the Church were widely acknowledged as the broad foundation for morality and law.[202]

As explained in the introduction to this thesis, recognizing characteristics antithetical to Burke's Anglican Christianity does not negate it. Indeed, as Barnett describes, the framework for most eighteenth-century radical dissenters was still built around Christianity:

> In eighteenth-century Europe, this framework was almost exclusively Christian in origin and orientation. Christian ethics underpinned most of the laws, mores and cultural practices of day-to-day life. […] It is not surprising, then, despite often exhibiting the most trenchant anticlericalism, that many radicals and desists continued to subscribe to some sort of Christianity or religion exemplified by elements found in the Old or New Testament. […] Unfortunately, this is a wide-range of religious thought, and its marked degrees of adherence to Christianity or Christian concepts, has still not been adequately acknowledged by many historians […].[203]

So, while scholarship has not yet charted an official hierarchy of the degrees of adherence to Christianity, and how they are marked in proximity to traditional Anglicanism, we can assume—for Burke—that the mode of thought measured farthest from Anglicanism is, conceivably, closer to atheism, and therefore less favourable. This would have been his

[202] Barnett, p. 17.
[203] Barnett, pp. 216–17.

official position, and where he marks a boundary of unbelief. In his 1772 *Speech on the Acts of Uniformity*, Burke argued in favour of reformation early in the speech, saying those who 'are commonly averse to all reformation' are 'those who loll at their ease in high dignities'.[204] Yet, he also declared later in his 1773 *Speech on a Bill for the Relief of Protestant Dissenters*: 'The most horrid and cruel blow that can be offered to civil society is through atheism.'[205] Ultimately, we will later see (in Chapter 2) how his mark of religious toleration measures a good distance away from traditional Anglicanism. R.K. Webb explains that the roots of dissent from the Anglican Church, which:

> […] can be found on St Bartholomew's Day, 24, August 1662, when, as a result of the Act of Uniformity of the previous April, more than nine hundred clergymen, dons and schoolmasters in England and Wales were ejected from their posts for their conscientious refusal to give entire and unfeigned assent to everything contained in the Book of Common Prayer […]'.[206]

However, tracing the various forms of dissent that sprouted from this event is problematic, because of the various degrees of personal adherence to the traditional church. Haakonssen explains:

> The problem with these definitions is that they exclude a large number of English Dissenters who found it eminently possible to adopt an Enlightenment agenda very similar to that of the mainstream clerical

[204] Burke, *Uniformity, Writings and Speeches*, Little Brown, VII p. 5.
[205] Edmund Burke, *Speech on a Bill for the Relief of Protestant Dissenters* (7 March 1773) in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1901), VII, p. 36.
[206] R.K. Webb, 'The emergence of Rational Dissent', in *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 12-31, (p. 12).

> modernism of the establishment without committing themselves to quite so stark a choice between inspiration and reason as their guide to the World.[207]

Perhaps then, we can think of the various forms of dissent as falling under this common religious denominator that Haakonssen provides:

> Most important, perhaps, was a broadly based rational religion characterised by a determination to combine reason and faith and by a will to tolerate different ways of doing so. It was a spirit generous enough to appeal not only to a wide latitudinarian spectrum of the Established Church and, by the middle of the eighteenth century, to most Presbyterians, but also to many Congregationalists and Baptists […] Rational religion was, in other words, a *modus vivendi* in the broad field between High-Church Anglicanism, orthodox or evangelical Dissent and deism. The important point is that this common religious denominator was only made possible by the divisions it tried to straddle.[208]

While we will see that, in his 1756 *Vindication*, Burke criticised the practice of rational religion to apply reason to personal religious faith. The *Vindication* was written in response to Henry St. John the Viscount Bolingbroke's posthumously-published essays, in which notions like Natural Religion were promoted (e.g., *Concerning the Nature, Extent, and Reality of Human Knowledge*; *Containing Some Reflection on the Folly and Presumption of Philosophers Especially in Matters of First Philosophy: On the Partial Attempts that have been made to reform the abuses of Human Reason*, all published

[207] Haakonssen, 'Enlightened Dissent: an introduction', p. 5.
[208] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

posthumously in 1754 as *The Philosophical Writings of the Late Henry St. John Viscount Bolingbroke*). Bolingbroke's writings exemplified the rise in written scrutiny against the religious foundations of civil government. However, we will also see in his later writings (in Chapter 4) how Burke promotes what Haakonssen describes above—a veritable common denominator of relative cultural legitimacy between various religious sects. Barnett verifies '[t]hat there were fears of the encroachment of such potentially anti-establishment heterodoxy in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries'; however, he goes on to explain that, despite this fear, the value of religious diversity was understood:

> […] diverse religious divides were common and were of course understood by many of the elite as potentially inimical to the well-being of the state and the social order. Yet, paradoxically, almost all those radical in religion or politics also recognized the vital role of the Church in preserving the status quo.[209]

The condition of religious diversity in eighteenth-century (wherein it was feared, but deemed necessary) is part of the framework of modernity within which we can contextualize Burke's representation of global religions. We can also contextualize Burke's tactics in defending the Church (and the *status quo*) within this framework. Hampshire-Monk suggests that as Deism and 'Atheism, or arguments which were held to employ it, became more strident and confident […]', Anglicans deployed devices to undermine the position of Freethinking.[210] Paul Langford also believes that eighteenth-century Christian heterodoxy provoked a counter-vogue of Biblical orthodoxy: 'The evangelical revival had its origin in a period when conventional religion was under threat

[209] Barnett, p. 17.
[210] Hampshire-Monk, 'Skeptical Conservatism', p. 241.

from fashionable deism.'[211] Langford explains the social importance the established church had to English society in the eighteenth century:

> The Church had an obvious function as the appendage of a relatively liberal, decentralized State, and the preserve of a landed class which had a strong hold on the political institutions of the day.[212]

Langford's description of the Church's social value contributes to understanding the desire to defend it as an institution. Burke's *Vindication* conceivably participates in the backlash both Langford and Hampshire-Monk observe—a defence of 'everything most excellent and venerable' (i.e. religious authority).[213] Hampshire-Monk argues that Burke's defence against natural religion, the *Vindication*, employs secular characteristics: 'the most characteristic skeptical epistemological arguments used by Burke in support of his conservatism are secular adaptations of those deployed by Anglicans against the Deists.'[214] Hampshire-Monk suggests that Burke perpetuates a political tradition of scepticism about Reason's application to religious themes, which is 'at the heart of English Conservatism'.[215] Hampshire-Monk's argument is similar to Frohnen's, in its enrolment of Burke's religious perspective in anti-Enlightenment Conservatism: Hampshire-Monk views Burke's secular adaptations as supporting his Conservatism. Yet, if we consider Conservatism as a shield against change, or progressiveness, (as Frohnen

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[211] Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727 – 1783*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 235.
[212] *Ibid.*, p. 263.
[213] Edmund Burke, *A Vindication of Natural Society*, in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: The early writings*, ed. by T.O. McLoughlin, Paul Langford, James, T. Boulton, and William B. Todd, 9 vols, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), I, pp. 129–84, (p. 135).
[214] Hampshire-Monk, 'Skeptical Conservatism', p. 259.
[215] *Ibid.*, pp. 248, 235; The OED defines Fideism as: 'Reliance on faith alone rather than scientific reasoning or philosophy in questions of religion', Oxford English Dictionary, 'fideism', <http://www.oed.com/>, [October 29th, 2010].

does), I argue that Burke's secular adaptations, alongside other adaptations antithetical to Christ-centred Protestant thinking (e.g., Deistic, non-Christian adaptations), support Burke's progressiveness. Further, I will show that Burke's adaptations to progressiveness are evident not just in his *Vindication*, but the *Enquiry* and the *Account* as well. These texts reveal a demotion of genuine religious belief, and even a removal of a Godhead altogether. Burke's *Account*, especially, demonstrates how Burke begins to conceptualize ideas surrounding religious practice in a global sense.

The first passage I would like to consider is the preface to *Vindication*, added to the reprinted 1757 edition. The preface was added in light of a genuineness perceived underneath Burke's criticism of government (i.e. religion). The preface was added for the purposes of clarifying the *Vindication* as an ironic satire of 'the same Method of Attack by which some Men have assaulted Revealed Religion […]'.[216] Burke would have wanted to distance himself from any social stigma pointing towards a genuine criticism of the Church. The Blasphemy Act of 1698 dictated that any individual who denied the existence of the one true Christian God, the inherent idea of the trinity, or the divine authority of the scripture, could be punished by censorship, imprisonment, or even (in one reported case) hanging: Thomas Aikenhead of Edinburgh was hanged in 1697 for criticizing the gospel.[217] However, questions surrounding the roles of religion and civil government, as well as the conversation about toleration, were ongoing throughout the eighteenth century. For example, Ian McBride writes on some examples of sermons given on religious toleration for Catholics and the role of the state: John Abernethy's sermon

[216] Burke, *Vindication*, *Writings*, I, p. 135.
[217] R.K. Webb, 'From Toleration to Religious Liberty', in *Liberty Secured? Britain before and after 1688*, ed. by J.R. Jones (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 158–98, (p. 162).

Persecution contrary to Christianity (23 October 1735), like Edward Synge's sermon ten years before (*The case of Toleration Consider'd with Respect Both to Religion and Civil Government: In a Sermon Preach'd in St. Andrew's Dublin*, 23 October 1725), 'rested on a redefinition of popery to include any state intervention in matters of conscience'.[218] Therefore, the intrusion of the reason of the state in matters of religious feeling or instinct is still volatile when Burke publishes his *Vindication*, and the later added preface in 1757. Burke's preface explains the need to protect certain foundations of society from reason:

> There is an Air of Plausibility which accompanies vulgar Reasonings and Notions taken from the beaten Circle of ordinary Experience, that is admirably suited to the narrow Capacities of some, and to the Laziness of others […] when we must seek in a profound Subject, not only for Arguments, but for new Materials of Argument, their Measures and their Method of Arrangement; when we must go out of the Sphere of our ordinary Ideas […] this we must do, or we do nothing, whenever we examine the Result of a Reason which is not our own. Even in Matters which are, as it were, just within our Reach, what would become of the World if the Practice of all moral Duties, and the Foundations of Society, rested upon having their Reasons made clear and demonstrative to every Individual?[219]

When he asks about the fate of the 'Foundations of Society', Burke confesses his worry about the scrutiny brought on by the application of reason to revealed religion. He

[218] Ian McBride, 'The common name of Irishman', in *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland c. 1650-1850*, ed. by Tony Claydon and Ian McBride, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 236–61, (p. 250).
[219] Burke, *Vindication*, *Writings*, I, p. 135–36.

insinuates that the presumptuous application of reason to such a 'profound Subject' would jeopardize 'the Practice of all moral Duties' (i.e., religious practice). Burke suggests that the use of reason restricts the capacity for contemplation outside of the sphere of ordinary ideas. Indeed, it is the empirical evidence of religious experience outside of the sphere of ordinary ideas upon which the Anglican defence depended. Hampshire-Monk explains: 'The success of their position hinged on […] the limits of reason in religious matters and the need to maintain the integrity of the sensory and textual evidence on which Christianity or Christian dogma was based.'[220]

Of course, Burke does not mean to completely discount reason; like David Hume, he simply views reason as a less effective way to motivate impulses and desires; in his *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), Hume writes: 'Reason, being cool and disengaged, is no motive to actions […] Taste, as it gives pleasure or pain […] becomes a motive to action, and is the first spring or impulse to desire and volition.'[221] Boulton writes, 'Burke, of course, follow(s) in a great tradition in holding his sensationalist philosophy: the dependence of the mind, for its ideas, on the senses was fundamental to the work of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume'.[222] Boulton's observation precedes others from Frohnen, Terry Eagleton, Paddy Bullard, and James Conniff that similarly link Hume and Burke in their argument for sensory sourced knowledge.[223]

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[220] Hampshire-Monk, 'Skeptical Conservatism', p. 237.
[221] David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (London: A. Millar, 1751), p. 211.
[222] Boulton, *Burke's Enquiry*, p. xxvi; Boulton and others draw a parallel between Burke's and Hume's writings on taste, and their belief 'that men are fundamentally alike in their sensory organs'—Hume's *Dissertation on Taste* appeared only two months before Burke's *Enquiry*. Boulton, p. xxix.
[223] 'Hume's Epicurean, like the young Burke, is a philosopher of sensation, dedicated to the study of an inward world of natural passions.' Bullard p. 92; also Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 45, and Conniff, *The Useful Cobbler*, p. 24.

These studies chiefly focus on Burke's later writings to observe the aesthetic source of manners and laws—behaviour being guided 'from the surface inward'.[224]

Ultimately, Burke's preface shapes an argument to leave the religious 'foundations of society' and their 'moral practices' undisturbed by reason. In doing so, Burke is conceivably promoting the preservation of religious practice, feeling, or instinct—by suggesting that the reason behind religious practice be left undemonstrated. By assigning this importance to the preservation of religious practice, Burke sets a precedent that demotes the importance of genuineness behind religious belief.

Like Hampshire-Monk, Paul Langford finds that Anglicans developed a consistent set of methods for deflecting threats to the established church; once used against Catholicism, and witchcraft, in the eighteenth century, these methods deflected the rising forms of freethinking (e.g., Natural Religion and Deism): 'The resources of polite society were increasingly deployed against popular superstition.'[225] Threats that were once considered valid to the established church, and punished by hanging, were now dismissed as frauds. For example, witchcraft was largely dismissed as a crime of thievery and deception (by the Witchcraft Act of 1736). The threat of Catholicism was once deflected by illustrating the absurdity of Catholic maxims, such as the actual presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist.[226] Burke attempts to illustrate the absurdity of Bolingbroke's arguments for Natural Religion through ironic imitation: *reductio ad absurdum*. At the very beginning of his defence, Burke explains that by demonstrating the absurdity of rhetorical engines in the criticism of government, he demonstrates the

[224] Frohnen, p. 62; Eagleton looks to Burke's *First Letter on Regicide Peace* (1796); see Burke's argument 'Manners are more important than laws […]', in *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*, in *Writings*, IX, (p. 242).
[225] Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*, p. 282.
[226] Hampshire-Monk, 'Skeptical Conservatism', p. 237.

absurdity of the rhetorical argument against Established Religion: 'the same Engines which were employed for the Destruction of Religion, might be employed with equal Success for the Subversion of Government […].'[227] Burke's use of irony to convey the seriousness of his concern resonates with Berman's description of modernity, wherein 'the deepest modern seriousness must express itself through irony'.[228]

Langford's edition of Burke's *Vindication* wagers that Burke's readers immediately recognized it as an attack on Bolingbroke, not Freethinkers in general.[229] Perhaps this is a hasty assertion, considering that, at the time of Burke's response, Bolingbroke was not only dead, but the work with which Burke took so much issue was not even published while Bolingbroke was living. In addition, if there was an Anglican backlash against the rising threat of freethinking, an attack aimed at the general threat seems more logical than a personal attack against one deceased proponent of freethinking (Bolingbroke).[230] It is more likely to consider the possibility that Burke indeed, was attacking the rising threat of Christian heterodoxy in general. Langford explains that defenders of the Anglican Church opportunistically deployed resources to bolster support for their sacred tradition; he draws an example of this opportunistic deployment with the story of William Romaine and Thomas Sherlock. Romaine and Sherlock were two Evangelical revivalists who seized the opportunity of the London earthquakes of 1750 to urge the people 'to reform their moral conduct before divine punishment was visited on them'.[231] Without the aid of natural disaster, of course, Burke's *Vindication* can also be

[227] Burke, *Vindication*, in *Writings*, I, p. 134.
[228] Marshall Berman, p. 14.
[229] Langford, in *Writings*, I, 131.
[230] Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People*, p. 255.
[231] *Ibid.*, p. 284.

viewed as opportunistic. In a sense, Burke seized the opportunity of Bolingbroke's published works to promote the preservation of religious foundation. The global standing of the English democratic monarchy is based in the religious foundation of divine ascendancy, as denoted in Declaration of Right (under William III and Mary II in 1689). As Frohnen observes, 'The Petition of Right, habeas corpus, and the very rule of law would be swept away should the legitimacy of their royal originators be denied.'[232]

When it comes to the preservation of religious establishment, we can locate Burke's methods in that of in Charles de Secondat, Baron de Montesquieu. Others, like C.P. Courtney, have observed Montesquieu's influence on Burke and his approach to history and political thought.[233] Ian McBride suggests that Burke's grasp on 'humanity only understood in terms of the specific social environmental conditions of each nation […]' comes from Montesquieu.[234] I argue that Burke also follows Montesquieu when it comes to thinking about religion more broadly.

I argue that the *modus operandi* of Burke's *Vindication* (to demonstrate the necessity of religion by translating it into the sphere of civil law) is made visible when examined next to Montesquieu's *The Spirit of Laws* (*De l'esprit des lois*), 1748. For example, the utility of religion that Burke stresses in his *Vindication* resonates with the same maxim expressed in Montesquieu's *Spirit of Laws.* Montesquieu advises that '[…] it is extremely useful for them ['the human race'] to believe the existence of a God. From the idea of his non-existance, immediately follows that of our independence; or, if we

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[232] Frohnen, p. 67.
[233] C.P. Courtney, *Montesquieu and Burke*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell & Mott, Ltd., 1963), see also Conniff, p. 43.
[234] Ian McBride, *Eighteenth Century Ireland: Isle of Slaves*, (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 2009), p. 97; McBride also observes: 'Irish radicals of the 1790s, like their counterparts in France, see themselves as the heirs of the great philosophers, Locke, Montesquieu, Diderot and Voltaire, and celebrated their collective triumph over the ignorance and superstition of the past,' p. 51.

cannot conceive this idea, that of disobedience'.[235] Burke echoes Montesquieu's fear of independence and disobedience in the *Vindication* excerpt quoted earlier.[236] The answer to Burke's anxiety is tyranny: in Burke's view, the tyranny of individualism is staved off by a religious structure. If the means of staving off disobedience—the Church—demanded reason, it might be discredited. Discrediting the Church means discrediting the monarchy, because if there is no deity personally involved in humankind's political actions, a monarchy founded on divine ascendancy becomes invalid. Therefore, Burke imitates Montesquieu's techniques in defending the only hope of maintaining social stability: established religion. In doing so, Burke's *Vindication* sets a precedent that values religion in terms of social utility first and genuine religious belief second, which follows a conceptually secular logic, if the need for belief in God is demoted. Brian Young explains that Burke's contemporary Josiah Tucker, a Welsh churchman, also thought that Burke did not have any genuine religious interest in preserving the established church, only political interest.[237] Religious belief that is so consciously aware of its importance to a national cultural foundation is—conceivably— secular.

The logical construction of Montesquieu's technique in his *Spirit of Laws* introduces the juxtaposition of civil laws and religious laws in order to illustrate absurdity, which Burke later copies in his *Vindication*. Montesquieu writes, 'To say that religion is not a restraining motive, because it does not always restrain is equally absurd

[235] Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat, baron de. *The Spirit of Laws* / *De l'esprit des lois.* 11th edn, 2 vols , (London, 1777), II, Book XXIV, p. 115.
[236] 'What would become of the World of the Practice of all moral Duties, and the Foundations of Society, rested upon having their Reasons made clear and demonstrative to every Individual?', Burke, *Vindication*, in *Writings*, I, p. 135–36.
[237] Young, p. 71.

as to say, that the civil laws are not a restraining motive.'[238] The universal assumption in Montesquieu's logic is that civil laws have the capacity to restrain; to assume the contrary would be absurd. Montesquieu's logic unfolds in this way: universal knowledge stipulates civil laws possess the capacity to restrain; to assume the contrary would be a logical absurdity; religious laws possess restraining powers comparable to that of civil laws; therefore, to assume that religious laws do not possess the capacity to restrain would be equally as absurd as to assume that civil laws do not have the capacity to restrain. Burke traces his defence in his *Vindicatio*n from Montesquieu's juxtaposition of civil and religious authority. The universal assumption in the *Vindication* is the necessity of civil laws for social restraint; to argue for the absence of civil laws would be absurd. Burke employs that same 'engine' of absurdity against natural religion.

Continuing on the path of Montesquieu's *Spirit of Laws*, the satirical nature of Burke's *Vindication* also is apparent in the execution of the absurd argument. For example, Montesquieu warns:

> It is a false way of reasoning against religion, to collect in a large work a long detail of the evils it has produced, if we do not give at the same time an enumeration of the advantages which have followed from it. Were I to relate all the evils that have arisen in the world from civil laws, from monarchy, and from republican government, I might tell of frightful things.'[239]

From this illustration of weakness, Burke takes his cue: the *Vindication* is, indeed, as Montesquieu warns, 'large work' 'reasoning against religion'—addressed with the

[238] Montesquieu, *L'esprit*, p. 115.
[239] Montesquieu, *L'esprit*, p. 115.

'engine's' of natural law, of course. Therefore, his satirical attack on natural law is actually a 'long detail of evils it [religion] has produced.' In an effort to demonstrate the absurdity of reasoning against government (i.e. religion), Burke provides a long enumeration of all of the frightful things that have resulted from civil law. Montesquieu's closing example is how one-sided, and monotonous, an argument that simply listed 'the evils that have arisen in the world from civil laws, from monarchy [… etc.]. Montesquieu warns that such an argument might tell of frightful things, but it would still be a 'false way of reasoning,' in its fallacious appeals to emotion, consequence, even novelty. In short, Burke executes his *reductio ad absurdum* tactic—which is characteristic of the Anglican defence against Deism—by following a model that bears striking similarity to that of Montesquieu's. The irony lies within Burke's demonstration of the very weakness of the freethinking argument defined in Montesquieu's *Spirit of Laws*. Burke demonstrates Montesquieu's flaw in the anti-religious argument when he 'relates all the evils that have arisen in the world from civil laws':

> 'The Babylonian, Assyrian, Median, and Persian Monarchies must have poured out Seas of Blood in their Formation, and in their Destruction'.[240]
>
> […]
>
> 'The Struggle between the Macedonians and Greeks, and before that, the Disputes of the Greek Commonwealths among themselves, for unprofitable Superiority, from one of the bloodiest Scenes in History.'[241]
>
> […]
>
> 'You will find every Page of its History dyed in Blood, and blotted and

[240] Burke, *Vindication, Writings*, I, p. 144.
[241] *Ibid.*, p. 145.

> confounded by Tumults, Rebellions, Massacres, Assassinations, Proscriptions, and a Series of Horror […]'[242]

Burke is being rather facetious when he continues the list of atrocities: 'Let us pass by the Wars, and the Consequences of them, which wasted Grecia-Magna, before the Roman Power prevailed in that Part of Italy. They are perhaps exaggerated; therefore I shall only rate them at one Million.'[243] The joke is, of course, that 'one Million' is not an un-exaggerated number. Thus, Burke illustrates the weakness and absurdity in this form of argument, which Montesquieu had already explained in his *Spirit of Laws*.

Montesquieu refers to 'the human race' when he contends, 'it is extremely useful for them to believe the existence of a God. From the idea of his non-existence, immediately follows that of our independence; or, if we cannot conceive this idea, that of disobedience'.[244] Montesquieu's rather pragmatic perspective about the precept of religion's belief in a God manifests as a major pillar in Burke's defence of the sacred. Montesquieu's model of religious pragmatism offered in his *Spirit of Laws* is as follows:

> The question is not to know whether it would be better that a certain man, or a certain people, had no religion, than to abuse what they have; but to know which is the least evil, that religion be sometimes abused, or that there be no such restraint as religion on mankind.[245]

Montesquieu poses the question: 'What is worse—a world in which religion provides social stability, but is sometimes abused, or a world without religious restraint of any kind?'. Clearly, Montesquieu values the restraining powers of religion on humankind—

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[242] *Ibid.*, p. 146.
[243] *Ibid.*, p. 147.
[244] Montesquieu, *L'esprit*, p. 115.
[245] *Ibid.*, p. 116.

valuing religion in terms of social utility first and genuine religious belief second. Again, such a conscious acknowledgment of the cultural necessity of religious belief renders it—in a way—secular.

Burke's imitation of Montesquieu's religious pragmatism is most evidently exemplified through his perspective on war. Above, Montesquieu acknowledges that (like war, or civil law) religion might be responsible for some evils in society, but submits that the occasional abuse of religion is far more acceptable that a world without religious restraint. Burke shares Montesquieu's view by translating it into the sphere of civil law. In his *Vindication*, Burke lists the horrible evils of government, but ultimately resolves that a society with no civil law (i.e. no religion) is worse:

> But suppose we were inclined to make the most ample Concessions; let us concede *Athens, Rome, Carthage*, and two or three more of the antient, and as many of the modern Commonwealths, to have been, or to be free and happy, and to owe their Freedom and Happiness to their political Constitution. Yet allowing all this, what Defence does this make for artificial Society in general, that these inconsiderable Spots of the Globe have for some short Space of Time stood as Exceptions to a Charge so general? But when we call these Governments free, or concede that their Citizens were happier than those which lived under different Forms, it is merely *ex abundanti*.[246]

Burke questions whether the social prosperity of a people, who 'owe their Freedom and Happiness' to an artificial society, is worth potential bloodshed. Essentially, Burke is

[246] Burke, *Vindication*, *Writings*, I, p. 166.

asking the same question as Montesquieu did: 'What is worse—a world in which civil law (i.e., religion) sometimes results in war, or a world without civil law (i.e., religion) or restraint of any kind?'. In the end, social utility wins: a religion that pacifies the human race is far more preferable than a society without religious restraint.

Another of Burke's Montesquieu imitations comes with his use of the image of the prince. (In other essays, we can conceive of Burke translating this as his the Ideal or Fine Gentleman).[247] Both Montesquieu and Burke use the image of the lone monarch—in terms of religion restraining the despotic tendencies of a monarch. With regard to Burke's *Vindication*, the image of the lone monarch manifests when he explains: 'War […] ought to be the only Study of a Prince […]'.[248] Burke places Sesostris toward the beginning in a list of lone monarchs throughout history, and their tyrannical tendencies:

> All Empires have been cemented in Blood. […] There were Conquerers, and Conquests, in those Days; and consequently, all that Devastation, by which they are formed, and all that Oppression by which they are maintained. We know little of Sesostris, but that he led out of Egypt an Army of above 700,000 Men; that he over-ran the Mediterranean Coast […]the Losses of the Conqueror, may amount to a Million of Deaths, and then we shall see this Conqueror, the oldest we have on the Records of History, (though, as we have observed before, the Chronology of these remote Times is extremely uncertain) opening the Scene by a Destruction of at least one Million of his Species, unprovoked but by his Ambition,

[247] See Burke's 'The Character of a Fine Gentleman' in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. by Paul Langford, 9 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), I, pp. 62–64.
[248] Burke, *Vindication*, *Writings*, I, p. 141.

> without any Motives but Pride, Cruelty, and Madness […]ut solely to make so many People, in so distant Countries, feel experimentally, how severe a Scourge Providence intends for the human Race, when he gives one Man the Power over many, and arms his naturally impotent, and feeble Rage, with the Hands of Millions, who know no common Principle of Action, but a blind Obedience to the Passions of their Ruler.[249]

Fitting in this analysis of monarchs into his appeal to preserve established religion is meant to bolster his illustration of religion's power to restrain. Burke's image of a lone monarch (Sesostris, 'one Man [with] the Power over many'), is resonant of Montesquieu's description of the King of France in his *Persian Letters* (1721). Montesquieu explains that the king's power over his people is only restrained by an even more powerful magician: 'The magician is called the Pope: sometimes he makes him believe that the bread which he drinks is not bread, or that the wine that he drinks is not wine, and a thousand other things of the same nature.'[250] Rather than demonstrating the restraining power that one individual (the pope) may have over another, Montesquieu is illustrating the wider concept of religion's power over potentially tyrannical monarchs. The power of the lone monarch (like Sesostris) can be restrained by religion. Granted, Montesquieu is referring to the Catholic Church, which recalls the anti-Catholic absurdity tactics of the pro-Anglican defence above. Ultimately, however, Montesquieu reveals his understanding of the arbitrary nature of religion and the psychological pull it has over people, the masses and their leaders. The resonances of Montesquieu's thought

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[249] *Ibid.*, p. 142–43.
[250] Montesquieu, Charles de Secondat, baron de., *Persian letters/ Lettres Persanes*, trans. by Mr Flloyd, (London: J. & R. Tonson, 1775), p. 40.

surrounding God and religion in Burke's thought on the same proves his reliance on, and approval of, this strand of early Enlightenment thought. Further, locating Burke's religious thinking in line with Montesquieu's demonstrates his demotion of genuine religious belief; which begins to show how Burke adapts to more progressive ideologies wherein a Godhead is less relevant. I will now argue that a further decrease in the relevancy (or necessity) of a Godhead is seen in Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). In the *Enquiry,* we can also see the way in which Burke adopts another of the devices 'deployed by the Anglicans against the Deists': promoting sensory evidence, or sentiment, over reason. I will also argue that *Enquiry* dissolves conceptual boundaries between sacred and profane by promoting a generalized concept of awe.

Enquiry: Diluting and removing the concept of God; Burke's compliance with Christian heterodox thinking

Many studies have expertly analysed Burke's *Enquiry* to argue him as an aesthetician and a rhetorician. Paddy Bullard believes that the *Enquiry* 'is "rhetorical" insofar as it focuses on everyday evidence of how language moves people. […] its approach is practical and utilitarian'.[251] Terry Eagleton too believes that Burke's 'theory' on aesthetics is a theory on the 'function of rhetoric'.[252] Some studies also view the *Enquiry* as Burke's understanding of the psychology of the human mind.[253] However, little is said about Burke's *Enquiry* revealing something about Burke's religious thinking (especially as it confronts modernity). While Richard Bourke also treats Burke as an

[251] Bullard, p. 82.
[252] Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 52.
[253] A. Connoly, 'Psychoanalytic theory in times of terror', *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, 48 (2003), 407–31; Bullard, p. 83.

aesthetician, he mentions Burke's *Enquiry* as contributing to the understanding of aesthetic 'responses to religion'; however, he insists upon the treatise as being strictly concerned with 'the foundations of aesthetic psychology'—not ideas surrounding religion.[254] Bourke warns that it is a mistake to categorize it as being strictly a political or theological work, but admits that it 'has implications for both politics and religion'.[255] We may know theology as, 'the study or science which treats God, […] and His relations with man and the universe'.[256] Bullard too does not think of the *Enquiry* in theological terms, but if theology entails the manner in which one conceives of God, Burke does wonder about this.[257] While it is true that Burke wonders about the human capacity to conceive of God, because of the limitations of reason in matters outside the 'Sphere of our ordinary Ideas', he makes a case for the use of God as an example of conceiving of the sublime.[258] Below, Burke is hesitant about using God as an example of this source of the sublime, but admits that it is just too appropriate an example to avoid:

> I purposely avoided when I first considered this subject, to introduce the idea of that great and tremendous being, as an example in an argument so light as this; though it frequently occurred to me, not as an objection to, but as a strong confirmation of my notions in this matter.[259]

Therefore, I believe there is more to be said about the way in which Burke conceptualizes ideas surrounding religion, including the idea of God, in his *Enquiry*. Moreover, there is

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[254] Richard Bourke, 'Pity and Fear: Providential Sociability in Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry*', in Michael Funk Deckard and Koen Vermeir eds., *The Science of Sensibility: Reading Edmund Burke's Philosophical Enquiry* (Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag GmbH, 2011), pp. 151–77, (p. 2).
[255] Bourke, 'Pity and Fear', p. 2.
[256] Oxford English Dictionary, 'theology', c. 1362-1969, following J.P. Gabler's 1787 distinction of theology, <http://www.oed.com/>, [June 28th, 2012].
[257] Bullard, p. 90.
[258] Burke, *Vindication*, *Writings*, I, p. 136.
[259] Burke, *Enquiry*, *Writings*, I, p. 239.

more to be said about the expanded way in which Burke treats these ideas in the text. I agree with the case made by Eagleton: that the sublime cannot be discussed without the concept of God:

> It is worth nothing, incidentally, that there may be something distinctively Irish about Burke's enthusiasm for sublimity. For if the sublime is that which beggars description and baffles representation, then the ultimate name for it is God […].[260]

In other words, a way to conceive of this amorphous concept of the sublime that can easily elude human understanding is to render all things sublime into a general concept called God. God is an indiscernible concept that can be translated for the inadequate human mind as 'the sublime'.[261] Eagleton qualifies the 'Irishness' of this concept with a mention of 'the greatest medieval Irish philosopher, John Scottus Eriugena. Eriugena also believes that God is beyond human understanding, and transcends determinacy, 'and that there exists in humanity a kind of non-definitive or indeterminate knowledge by which we can unite non-dominatively with the world'.[262] Therefore, all things incomprehensible by human reason are rendered into a general category of the sublime, which subverts the dominative power inherent in a Deity. My reading of Burke's *Enquiry* expands on Bourke's and Eagleton's: I further argue that a conceptualization of God that transcends definition and denomination softens the determinacy of religious boundaries. Ultimately,

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[260] Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 50.
[261] Burke's translating the indiscernible into something discernable has been linked with the theme of *jen e sais quoi* in French literature. See Louis Marin, 'On the Sublime, Infinity, *Jen e sais quoi'*, in *A New History of French Literature*, ed. by D. Hollier, (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1989), pp. 340–45.
[262] Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 50; see Dermot Moran, 'Nature, Man and God in the Philosophy of John Scottus Eriugena', in *The Irish Mind*, ed. by Richard Kearney, (Dublin, 1985), pp. 91–106.

Bourke's reading of the *Enquiry*, like Eagleton's and so many others, is an exercise in linking Burke's aesthetic thinking to his politics: 'in order to understand the relations between aesthetics and politics in Burke's writings, the primary components of the relationship have to be separately analysed before their combined significance can be properly understood'.[263] I wish, rather, to understand the relations between Burke's representation of religion and modernity. I wish to offer a more nuanced reading of how 'he [Burke] underlined the significance of the pleasures of the imagination in consolidating spiritual and secular relationships' in the *Enquiry*, and other early writings.[264] Bourke suggests here that Burke's representation of the sacred versus the secular collapses 'all affective relations into matters of taste'.[265] I think the implications here are more than just a matter of taste; I believe that Burke occasionally blends sacred and secular as a matter of comprehending, adapting, and salvaging ideas surrounding religion and God in the face of increasingly freethinking and secularized modernity. Bourke says that the neo-classical appropriation of Longinus was meant 'to serve as a defence of the enthusiasm underlying religion which the spirit of scepticism could pervert […]'.[266] Bourke recognises Anglican coping mechanisms in Burke's re-appropriation of Longinus' sublime; which resonates with Langford's and Hampshire-Monk's recognition of defences against ideologies subversive to established Christianity. I argue that Burke's appropriation of the traditional sublime resonates with Deistic, and non-God-centred thinking, rather than supports Christian enthusiasm. I believe that Burke's expanded notion of God in the concept of the sublime, along with the blurring of boundaries

[263] Bourke, 'Pity and Fear', p. 29.
[264] *Ibid.*, p. 2.
[265] *Ibid.*, p. 13.
[266] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

between sacred and profane, reveals to us that Burke understood the necessity for ideas surrounding God and religious practice to be adaptable in order to withstand the de-ossification of eighteenth-century religious thought.

We know that the purpose of Burke's *Enquiry* is to differentiate between the concepts of the sublime and the beautiful; Burke writes 'the ideas of the sublime and the beautiful stand on foundations so different, that it is hard, I had almost said impossible, to think of reconciling them in the same object'.[267] Burke's *Enquiry* can be placed in historical line with other studies of emotions, e.g., Marin Cureau de la Chambre's *Caractères des passions* (1640), or *The Art to Know Men* (1650). John Locke's, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1694) treats humanity in individual terms; Burke treats humanity in group terms, he validates the moralistic treatment of groups. We can even look to works like Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan or the Matter, Forme and Power of a Common Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil* (1651) as anticipating the themes of social contract theory and the necessity of religion in Burke's early writings. However, drawing comparisons between these thinkers here presents difficulties, inasmuch as Burke's *Enquiry* is an investigational work rather than a formal statement of his philosophies; unlike Locke, Hume, and Hobbes, Burke did not author comprehensive work on his theories and philosophies (e.g. in the form of a treatise).[268] We further know that Burke's engagement with the notion of the sublime places him in a historical line with Longinus, and others, for example Francis Hutcheson, *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of*

[267] Burke, *Enquiry*, in *Writings*, I, p. 273.
[268] Many studies have expertly drawn comparisons between these works, making it unnecessary to draw them here: Frans De Bruyn, 'Hooking the Leviathan: The Eclipse of the Heroic and the Emergence of the Sublime in Eighteenth Century British Literature', *Eighteenth Century Theory and Interpretation*, I (1987), 195–215, and Thomas Weiskel, *The Romantic Sublime: Studies in the Structure and Psychology of Transcendence* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

Beauty and Virtue (1725), and *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions* (1728).[269] Other eighteenth-century minds, Joseph Addison and John Bailee, engage with sublimity by referring to it as greatness ordained by God; Burke's thinking on the sublime's physiological sources set his interpretation apart from theirs.[270] James Conniff, like Eagleton and Bullard, links Burke to Hume and Locke in his forensic approach to the biological or physiological sources of aesthetic sublime experience: 'Locke saw the question as one of biological structure. God, in his wisdom, has made man to operate a certain way. In so doing, man not only brings pleasure to himself, but also works God's will.'[271] Boulton comments on the frequent use of passages from Genesis in the eighteenth century to convey the sublime: for example, 'God said, Let there be Light […]'.[272] Boulton observes that 'Burke is one of the few writers [on the sublime] who ignore it'.[273] I think Burke's conceptualization of a profane (or secular) sublime lends something to understanding the expanded aspects of Burke's representation of God and religious boundaries.

While Burke's *Enquiry* is not an ironic justification for established religion, like the *Vindication*, it too conceptually works toward the Anglican defence agenda by outlining the power and social utility of empirical, and sensory, evidence—upon which the religious defence depends. The link from Burke's polemical *Vindication* to his philosophical *Enquiry* becomes clear with some additional insight from Hampshire-

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[269] See Bolieau *ibid*.; Longinus, *Dionysiou Longinou peri hyposous hypomnema: Dionysii Longini de sublimitate commentarious*, ed. by Zachary Pearce, (London, 1743).
[270] Joseph Addison's publication, *The Spectator*, No. 493 and John Baillie's *Essay on the Sublime* (1747) as cited in Boulton, p. l.
[271] Conniff, p. 24; see also Bullard p. 92, and Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 45.
[272] Gensis 1. III.
[273] Boulton, *Burke's Enquiry,* p. liv; Boulton cites the above Biblical quote as in Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, trans. by G. Gregory (London: 1787), I, p. 350.

Monk. Hampshire Monk asserts that the success of the Anglican defence against Deism depended on promoting '[…] certain epistemological and hermeneutical issues having to do with the limits of reason in religious matters […]'.[274] Eagleton, Bourke, Bullard, and others have viewed the *Enquiry* as a dissertation outlining the value of the sensory experience, and conversely the limitations of reason, but his *Vindication* too warned readers about the limitations of reason in the consideration of a 'profound Subject', such as established religion, and concepts inherent to that subject, (e.g., God).[275] To protect religion from the scrutiny of reason, the Anglican defence made use of what Hampshire-Monk calls, '[…] fideistic religious discourse […]'.[276] Fideism refers to interpretation, 'according to which all (or some) knowledge depends upon faith or revelation, and reason […] is to be disregarded'.[277] Fideistic thinking is evident in the distance Burke puts between reason and religion throughout the *Vindication* and the *Enquiry*.[278]

The following excerpt from the *Enquiry* demonstrates an attempt to illustrate the weakness of reason in comparison with other sensory forces of the mind that can discern things outside the 'Sphere of our ordinary Ideas'.

> That great chain of causes, which linking one to another even to the throne of God himself, can never be unravelled by any industry of ours. When we go but one step beyond the immediate sensible qualities of things we go

[274] Hampshire-Monk, 'Skeptical Conservatism', p. 237.
[275] Refer to the discussion from the previous section about the preface to Burke's *Vindication*. Burke, *Vindication*, in *Writings*, I, 135.
[276] Hampshire-Monk, 'Skeptical Conservatism', p. 236.
[277] Oxford English Dictionary, 'fideism', c. 1885, <http://www.oed.com/>, [October 29th, 2010].
[278] Burke's preference to separate reason and religion is clear when he insinuates that the presumptuous application of reason to such a 'profound Subject' would jeopardize 'the Practice of all moral Duties'. Burke, *Vindication*, in *Writings*, I, p. 136.

> out of our depth. All we do after that is but a giant struggle that shows we are in an element which does not belong to us.[279]

Discussing the interpretation of causes—particularly, those linked to God—Burke warns that any effort made 'beyond the immediate sensible qualities of things' extends past mankind's 'element'. In other words, humankind's capacity for religious interpretation does not extend beyond the immediate sensory experience.

Burke's *Enquiry* also defines the inferiority of reason in reckoning feelings: 'I should imagine, that the influence of reason in producing our passions is nothing near so extensive as it is commonly believed.'[280] There is a perception of Burke's confrontation with modernity as being chiefly concerned with the loss of feelings, as perceived through aesthetics and sensory experience. Marshall Berman mentions Burke as one figure for whom modernity brings, 'the development of industry as a radical negation of the development of feeling.'[281] However, it is important to acknowledge that Burke also sees the value of reason: 'But as many of the works of imagination are not confined to the representation of sensible object, nor to the efforts upon the passions, but extend themselves to the manners […] they come within the province of the judgement, which is improved by attention and by the habit of reasoning'.[282] Burke's definition of reason is an Anglican one; it is a 'guide' implanted into humankind by 'Providence':

> '[w]e are indebted for all our Miseries to our Distrust of that Guide, which Providence thought sufficient for our Condition, our own natural Reason,

[279] Burke, *Enquiry*, in *Writings*, I, p. 283.
[280] *Ibid.*, p. 221.
[281] Marshall Berman, p. 45.
[282] Burke, *Enquiry*, *Writings*, I, p. 206.

> which rejecting both in human and divine Things, we have given our Necks to the Yoke of political and theological Slavery'.[283]

Humankind cannot ignore the guide supplied to it by providence: reason. Burke argues that rejection of reason in things divine and non-divine would resign humankind to the slavery of that which would rationalize emotion: theology and politics. Burke prizes the mind's capacity to produce imagination and sentiment, and simply warns against a complete submission to reason. His *Vindication* describes reason in terms of a *yoke* that restricts contemplation outside of the 'Sphere of our ordinary Ideas'. The continuation of that maxim in his *Enquiry* demonstrates a distance between reason and faith that can only be described as fideistic.

William Hazlitt's 'On the Character of Burke' (1807) expands on Burke's predilection for the use of emotions in social governance:

> He knew that the rules that form the basis of private morality are not founded in reason, this is, in the abstract properties of those things which are the subjects of them, but in the nature of man, and his capacity of being affected by certain things from habit, from imagination and sentiment, as well as from reason.[284]

Hazlitt explains Burke's understanding that society must be governed upon the principles with which man is familiar in his private life. The most effective of these principles 'are not founded [solely] in reason,' but also from 'imagination and sentiment.' Burke is not for the dismissal of reason. He is, however, against the dismissal of imagination and

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[283] Burke, *Vindication […]*, (see Langford above), p. 183.
[284] William Hazlitt, 'On the Character of Burke', in 'Winterslow', in *The Works of William Hazlitt—III, Essays and Characters written there*, (London: Grant Richards, 1902), essay first published 1807, p. 162.

sentiment. Erring on the side of sentiment is a well-known feature of the eighteenth century. Langford explains that if there was an Anglican backlash against the rise of Deism, then '[s]entiment was intimately connected with the reviving […] the believers.'[285] Langford summarizes the development of sentiment during the Enlightenment, in a way that appropriately encompasses Burke's method:

> In France the sentimental tradition quickly became associated with the secularism of the French Enlightenment. But English secularism was a weaker force by far, and the English contribution to the use of sentiment was to turn it into a tool of piety rather than paganism.[286]

Langford indicates an eighteenth-century trend that linked the English use of sentiment with religious objectives. Exemplified in the literature of the time, novels such as Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1740), or Charles Shadwell's play *Irish Hospitality* (1720), utilize sentiment to illustrate the ever-triumphant power of religious virtue. In both stories, the religious virtue of the main character is rewarded.[287] Indeed, both works share a subtitle that incontrovertibly illustrates this trend: *Virtue Rewarded*.

Langford's assessment above is especially applicable to Burke's writing. For France, the eighteenth-century trend of sentimentality manifested in radical factions that utilized sentiment to fuel the flames of social discontent. In essence, the use of sentiment eventually led to the secular movements of the French Revolution. Conversely, the trend

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[285] Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, p. 470.
[286] *Ibid.*, p. 467.
[287] In the case of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela, or, Virtue rewarded*, (1740), (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1980), the servant Pamela's virtuous refusal of her master is rewarded with a socially acceptable marriage to him. In the case of Charles Shadwell's play, Sir Patrick Worthy's efforts in obtaining marriages for the characters is rewarded with social stability. Shadwell, Charles. *The works of Mr. Charles Shadwell: containing, The Fair Quaker of Deal; or, The Humours of the Navy. The Humours of the Army. Irish Hospitality; or, Virtue Rewarded. The Plotting Lovers; or, The Dismal Squire*, I, Dublin, 1720. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale, [September 6, 2010].

of sentimentality in England manifested as a religious device used against the threat of freethinking. For England, 'sentiment was intimately connected with' the mobilization of a religious revival—as a means to elicit sympathy.[288] We can construe Burke's use of sentiment as being compliant with the English use that Langford describes above—as a 'tool of piety'.[289]

Burke's *Enquiry* demonstrates an intricate understanding of sympathy—devoting three sections of the dissertation to the subject: '[…] sympathy must be considered as a sort of substitution, by which we are put into the place of another man, and affected in many respects as he is affected […]'.[290]

> Whenever we are formed by nature to any active purpose, the passion which animates us to it, is attended with delight, or a pleasure of some kind, let the subject matter be what it will; and as our Creator has designed we should be united by the bond of sympathy.[291]

Essentially, the animator of humankind's motivation to act on purpose is sympathy; all men are united in this bond. Burke treats the concept of awe in similar terms in his *Enquiry*: it is instilled in leaders; it pacifies and unifies men. The definition of awe and the various degrees of astonishment that Burke outlines in his *Enquiry* involves the process of terror through the senses:

> […] a mode of terror is the exercise of the finer parts of the system; and of a certain mode of pain be of such a nature as to act upon the eye or the ear, as they are the most delicate organs, the affection approaches more nearly

[288] Langford, *Polite and Commercial People*, p. 470.
[289] *Ibid.*, p. 467.
[290] Burke, *Enquiry*, *Writings*, I, p. 221.
[291] *Ibid.*, pp. 222.

> to that which has a mental cause […] the highest degree I call astonishment; the subordinate degrees are awe, reverence, and respect […].[292]

I will argue that Burke's analysis of awe is a generalized one that transcends boundaries between secular and sacred; it not only softens religious definition, but also argues a secular sublime akin to the sublimity seen in theories of modernity.

The eighteenth-century definition of 'awe' is strikingly similar to Burke's analysis 'of the passion caused by the sublime' in his *Enquiry*:

> The feeling of solemn and reverential wonder, tinged with latent fear, inspired by what is terribly sublime and, majestic in nature, e.g. thunder, a storm at sea.[293]

In line with the definition above, Burke argues that awe comes from a fear or reverence produced by the perception of the sublime; which, Burke explains, is some version of power. Section V of *Enquiry*, on 'Power', begins:

> Besides these things which directly suggest the idea of danger, and those which produce a similar effect from a mechanical cause, I know of nothing sublime which is not some modification of power.[294]

Burke goes on to blend divine and non-divine sources of awe, which comes from a perception of power. He asks the reader to consider the terror felt resulting from a powerful animal:

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[292] *Ibid*., pp. 288–89.
[293] Oxford English Dictionary, 'awe', c. 1757-1846, <http://www.oed.com/>, [April 1st, 2010].
[294] Burke, *Enquiry*, *Writings*, I, p. 236.

> Look at a man, or any other animal of prodigious strength, and what is your idea before reflection? Is it that this strength will be subservient to you, to your case, to your pleasure, to your interest in any sense? No; the emotion you feel is, lest this enormous strength should be employed to the purposes of rapine destruction. That power derives all its sublimity from the terror with which it is generally accompanied.[295]

Burke calls on examples of powerful animals that engender terror from their power, such as the Ox, Bull, Horse, Panther, and Rhinoceros. He further writes that that same source of the sublime in one's perception of power is seen in monarchs: 'The power which arises from institution in kings and commanders, has the same connection with terror. Sovereigns are frequently addressed with the title of *dread majesty*.'[296] He then links these non-divine sources of sublime power with the sublime power perceived in the concept of God: 'I know some people are of opinion, that no awe, no degree of terror, accompanies the idea of power, and have hazarded to affirm, that we can contemplate the idea of God himself without any such emotion.'[297] In this way, Burke begins to dedifferentiate between sacred and profane (or secular) sublime.

Burke cites divine, or deity-based, sources of awe: 'In the scripture, wherever God is represented as appearing or speaking, every thing terrible in nature is called up to heighten the awe and solemnity of the divine presence. The Psalms, and the prophetical books are crouded with instances of this kind.'[298] In the section on 'Power', Burke writes about the Biblical expression of fear, or awe, as seen in Psalm 139, he quotes: 'fearfully

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[295] *Ibid.*, p. 236.
[296] *Ibid.*, p. 238.
[297] *Ibid.*, p. 238.
[298] *Ibid.*, p. 240.

and wonderfully am I made'.[299] Burke suggests that the decidedly Christian awe is the same sort of awe in non-Christian texts: 'An heathan poet has a sentiment of a similar nature'.[300] Essentially, a poet conveying a sense of awe wherein God does not play a role is the same sense of awe as we see in Psalm 139. This is the demotion of religious belief, and the blending of religious boundaries. Burke continues to blur distinction between the sacred and the profane (or secular):

> It were endless to enumerate all the passages both in the sacred and profane writers, which establish the general sentiment of mankind, concerning the inseparable union of a sacred and reverential awe, with our ideas of the divinity. Hence the common maxim, *primos in orbe deos fecit timor* [in the first world the gods did fear]. This maxim may be, as I believe it is, false with regard to the origin of religion.[301]

The boundaries between sacred and profane are softened in a 'general sentiment'; a union of 'awe' makes them both sacred. If fear did not account for the origin of religion, then we can assume he thinks it was something like necessity. Nevertheless, the general sentiment of fear (or awe), which is present in both sacred and profane writers, is likened to the fear of the pre-Christian world felt for their gods. This perception of God(s) and religion is quite expanded, in the validation of Pre-Christian and Pagan awe.

Another way in which Burke engages with characteristics conceptually subversive to the one true God of Conservative revealed religion is the expanded, generalized way in which he refers to God:

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[299] *Ibid.*, p. 239; Psalm 139:14.
[300] *Ibid.*, p. 240, (Burke quotes Horace (*Epistles*, I, vi, 3–5) and Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura*, III, 28–30) as heathen poets).
[301] *Ibid.*, p. 240.

> I say then, that whilst we consider the Godhead merely as he is an object of the understanding, which forms a complex idea of power, wisdom, justice, goodness, all stretched to a degree far exceeding the bounds of our comprehension, whilst we consider the divinity in this refined and abstracted light, the imagination and passions are little or nothing affected.[302]

A sentence later, Burke continues:

> Thus when we contemplate the Deity, his attributes and their operation coming united on the mind, form a sort of sensible image, and as such are capable of affecting the imagination. Now though in a just idea of the Deity, perhaps none of his attributes are predominant, yet to our imagination, his power is by far the most striking.[303]

Burke's references to God throughout his *Enquiry* are expanded and obscured: 'the Deity', the Creator', and especially 'Godhead'. The idea of God is diluted to a generalized sacred concept. Burke's diffused conceptualization of God resonates with themes antithetical to Protestant Christianity. For example, we can construe the Deistic resonance in Burke's expanded concept of a Godhead, or Deity.

Leslie Stephen's grasp of eighteenth-century dissent and Deism helps to recognize this resonance. Stephen's study is a discussion of 'The Essence of Christianity', in which established Christianity is identified through the exacting of certain prescribed articles, such as: '[…] a profession of belief in the Athanasian Creed, the Thirty Nine Articles, or the Westminster Confession […]'; whereas, the Deism professed by the likes of Locke

[302] *Ibid.,* p. 239.
[303] *Ibid.,* p. 239.

and Toland retains only a core belief in God.[304] Stephen writes that Locke's 'Constructive Deism' views any addition to this core belief (e.g., the articles of the Church) as 'illusory'.[305] This definition of Deism resonates with Barnett's (discussed above): 'entailing belief in God', but dismissing all presumptions of Church authority as fraud.[306] While Deism shares a foundation in Christianity, it does not promote its prescribed articles of revelation. Instead, as Stephen explains, '[t]he passage from Christianity to Deism involves the attempt to banish mystery from theology, and to replace the God of revelation by the God of mathematical demonstration'.[307] Stephen also explains that the definition of Locke's and Toland's 'pure Deism' 'leaves speculations as to the nature of the Deity'; rather, the definition is ascertained through Deism's rejection of the articles exacted by the Church.[308] Therefore, it is valid to recognize Burke's representation of God in universal terms (as opposed to doctrinal terms, as represented in the articles of revelation) as exhibiting Deistic qualities.

Burke explains the shared sacredness between pre-Christian and Christian religions, fear:

> It is on this principle that true religion has, and must have, so large a mixture of salutary fear; and that false religions have generally nothing else but fear to support them. Before the christian religion had, as it were, humanized the idea of the divinity and brought it somewhat nearer to us, there was very little said of the love of God. […] any man is able to attain

[304] Leslie Stephen, *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols, (New York: G.P. Putnamn's Sons, 1876), I, p. 95.
[305] Stephen, p. 96.
[306] Barnett, p. 17.
[307] Stephen, p. 420.
[308] *Ibid.*, p. 109.

> an entire love and devotion to the Deity, will easily perceive, that it is not the first, the most natural, and the most striking effect which proceeds from that idea.[309]

Presumably, when Burke refers to Christianity's humanization of divinity, he means the introduction of a humanized figure in Jesus; before Jesus, love had little to do with man's understanding of God and religion. There is, of course, much value in exploring Burke's thoughts on love and affection; Eagleton, Frohnen, and Bourke all highlight the importance of love and affection in Burke's conceptualization of law and social stability. The *Enquiry* explains that pity comes from love and affection: 'pity is a passion accompanied with pleasure, because it arises from love and social affection'.[310] Bourke acknowledges pity as one side of a 'definite antithesis' within which a variety of sensory responses are contained (fear is the other side of the antithesis).[311] Frohnen observes the centralization of affection for the *ancien régime*.[312] Bourke's and Frohnen's interpretation follows Eagleton's, which joins Burke together with Hume and Shaftesbury in the 'law of the Heart': laws stem from manners, which stem from aesthetic experience; hence, laws come from the heart.[313] However, when it comes to understanding Burke's ideas surrounding religion, perhaps fear is more useful: according to Burke's assertion above, love is not the natural response when we think of God; the natural response is fear, or awe.

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[309] Burke, *Enquiry*, *Writings*, I, p. 241.
[310] *Ibid.*, p. 222.
[311] Richard Bourke, 'Pity and Fear', p. 20.
[312] 'The most tragic and important casualty of the Old Regime's administrative centralization was the affectionate character of ancient local communities.' Frohnen, p. 139.
[313] Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 31–36.

Burke's definition of awe suggests that man's eschatological understanding is physiological, perceived by delicate organs such as the eye and ear. Other eighteenth-century texts support the theory that a subjective, sensory, experience serves as empirical proof for the existence of God. In short, any awe-striking experience conceivably provides proof of God's existence. According to James Foster's essay *The Usefulness, Truth, and Excellency of the Christian Revelation Defended* (1731), an awe-striking sensory experience could provide sufficient evidence for convincing an Atheist of God's existence:

> I very much question whether an atheist may not, by means of it, be convinced even of the being of a God. […] I believe, if we consider how much more strongly human nature is wrought upon by sensible proofs, than by a traditional account of things, we shall make no difficulty of allowing, that 'tis very possible, if he had this evidence, he might entertain very different thoughts of them.[314]

Foster suggests that the sheer amount of sensory evidence in the world for God's existence is so abundant, that the level of difficulty in encouraging an atheist to consider it is low. The example he provides is the sensory experience of any miracle in nature. Upon viewing such a miracle, Foster suggests that a nonbeliever would be struck with awe, and therefore convinced of the existence of God. This is so, as awe dissipates the capacity for thought (i.e. reason). According to Burke's *Enquiry*, '[n]o passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear […]'.[315] In

[314] James Foster, 'The Usefulness, Truth, and Excellency of the Christian Revelation Defended' (1731) in *History of British Deism*, (London: Routledge / Thoemmes Press, 1995), p. 45.
[315] Burke, *Enquiry*, *Writings*, I, p. 230.

other words, Foster is describing the same approach used by the Anglican defence, and purported by Burke: to find empirical evidence for the existence of God (and therefore the necessity of the Church) in sensory experience. The most powerful sensory experience is awe.

Unfolding the logic of Foster's defence will help to recognize the Deistic characteristics in Burke's *Enquiry*. Foster writes of empirical sensory experience sourced from a general Deity, and even nature—not the one true God:

> Let us suppose then, that he actually saw very great miracles wrought; that he had opportunities of examining them carefully; and that he was fully convinced upon the most diligent search, that they were all the known powers of nature, and contrary to the established course of things, and consequently was sure, not only that they were not juggling tricks, but that he was not imposed on by one who knew better than himself, the secret and invisible operation of natural causes…I will not take upon me to say, that these things are impossible to be accounted for, if there be not an infinite mind, the creator and governor of the universe, or consequently, that they are, strictly speaking, a demonstration of the existence of a Deity; but may they not have this effect upon him, to make him grave and considerate? May he not conclude, upon seeing such extraordinary appearances, that 'tis at least worth his while to think a little whether there be a God, and whether there be any thing in religion, or no? The surprise and awe, with which men are naturally stuck at such great and unexpected events, has a tendency to correct the levity of their minds, which leads to

an utter dissipation of thought […].[316]

Foster admits that perhaps the 'powers of nature' might not be the result of 'an infinite mind' or a 'creator and governor of the universe'. His point lies in the possibility that the sensory effect of these 'powers of nature' could have such an effect on a nonbeliever to encourage him at least to consider the possibility that they might be resultant of a Deity. As above, Burke's *Enquiry* comes to suggest a similar possibility: that subjects in nature can strike awe into a beholder, and effectively rob the mind of its powers of reason.

In both Foster and Burke, divine awe is subverted by the inclusion of non-divine, or secular, awe. For example, Burke describes the sense of awe a young person might feel toward figures of authority: 'young persons little acquainted with the world, and who have not been used to approach men in power, are commonly struck with an awe which takes away the free use of their faculties'.[317] Extending this religious or divine sense of awe to non-divine or worldly things, such as persons, and even nature, paradoxically undermines divine awe, or God-sourced awe, or at least the scriptural necessity of awe. Another example of this subversion is seen when Burke addresses the sublimity of nature in his *Enquiry*: he declares 'night more sublime than day […]', and a bright mountain less sublime than a dark one.[318] This resonates with the more general and rather deistic idea that God acts through the laws of nature.[319] In short, if both God and worldly things (profane poets) can produce awe, then the necessity to preserve established traditional ideas surrounding religion decreases.

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[316] Foster, p. 46–47.
[317] Burke, *Enquiry*, *Writings*, I, p. 238.
[318] *Ibid.*, p. 250.
[319] Alister E. McGrath, *Christian theology: an introduction*, (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 219.

John Leland—a Presbyterian Minister, who catalogued Deists and Freethinkers of the eighteenth century—offers a standard definition of eighteenth-century Deism. According to Leland, Deism regards God '[…] with a sacred awe and reverence of him as the wise and righteous Governor of the world […].'[320] The Deistic description of God is similar to the same notions of awe and reverence denoted by Burke in his *Enquiry*. J. C.D. Clark's view of eighteenth-century Christian heterodoxy helps to recognize the shades of heterodoxy in *Enquiry*. In the eighteenth century, forms of heterodoxy (e.g., Natural Religion, Deism, atheism) generally fell under a 'common label of "freethinkers" '.[321] Specifically, the term Deism was '[…] used to cover many different positions, may be approximately identified as an epistemological scepticism about revelation and an appeal to "natural religion" fundamentally to simplify the content of revealed theology'.[322] Clark further describes the main objective of eighteenth-century Deism:

> Deism professed to find confirmation in the major items of belief held in common between all religions; it derived a flexible piety, or a disguised atheism, from the evidence of nature […].[323]

Conceivably, if Burke's *Enquiry* promotes a rather Deistic idea that God and nature strike awe 'in common', and further that empirical evidence of awe can be found in the 'evidence of nature' or 'powers of nature', then the particularities of religious definition

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[320] Leland, John, *A view of the principal deistical writers that have appeared in England in the last and present century; with observations upon them, and some account of the answers that have been published against them. In several letters to a friend*, 2 vols, (London: Richardson and S. Clark, for R. and J. Dodsley, 1766), II, Preface, cclix, cclx.
[321] J.C.D. Clark, *English Society 1660-1832: Religion, ideology and politics during the ancien regime*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 237.
[322] *Ibid.*, p. 324.
[323] *Ibid.*, p. 324–25.

begin to melt. Manifestations of ideologies that are deistically or religiously obscuring or diffusive conceptually subvert the themes of a God and religion.

Jonathan Israel describes religiously subversive manifestations; versions of Deism and Atheism struggle against traditional religious ideas:

> Sporadically, especially in France and Italy, various manifestations of clandestine atheistic and deistic traditions reaching back via such authors as Bodin, Bruno, and Guilo Cesare Vanini, the alleged 'atheist' burned at the stake in Toulouse in 1619, and then through earlier Italian thinkers, notably Machiavelli and Pompanazzi, to ancient Roman and Greece, appeared, albeit usually in the veiled, camouflaged manner of the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century libertines. This form of intellectual dissent, termed *libertinisme érudit*, still an appreciable force in the late seventeenth century, sought to mask, but simultaneously to disseminate, views opposed to prevailing theological and metaphysical orthodoxies by presenting opinions and quotations culled mostly from classical authors in innovative and seditious ways, paying particular attention to sceptical, irreverent, and atheistic sources such as Lucian, Epicurius, and Sextus Empiricus, and historians of philosophy such as Diogenes Laertius.[324]

In short, religious modernity is marked by manifestations of ideologies that subvert religion, or ideologies that diffuse or disintegrate religious boundaries. The Epicurean example above rings with claims made by Paddy Bullard, who argues the Epicurean

[324] Israel, p. 15.

characteristics of Burke's *Enquiry*. Bullard refers to the passage in the *Enquiry* wherein Burke wonders about the satisfaction of the anatomist versus the ordinary man in the perception of the human body.[325] Bullard argues, 'so long as we take the *Philosophical Enquiry* on its own modest terms, we can say there is something characteristically Epicurean in the dilemma. […] [its] emphasis on the functions of basic sensory inclination is distinctively Epicurean'.[326] The 'dilemma' is essentially between a physiological and a divine appreciation of anatomy. Bullard defines Burke's Epicurean characteristics as inherited from seventeenth-century Epicureanism; he refers to Jonathan Swift's patron, Sir William Temple, whose dissertation on gardening argues that it is prideful for man to attempt to understand nature.[327]

John Dennis helps us to construe Epicureanism as being, antithetical to Established Religion, and therefore, thematically similar to other ideologies subversive to the ossified church:

> For after the death of *Socrates*, there started up several Sects of Philosophers, as the Cyrenaicks, Cynicks, Peripateticks, Epicureans, Sceptics, some of them immediately, but all within a hundred and fifty years, who were all of them mortal Enemies, not only to the Grecian Revelation, but to the Revealed Religion in general.[328]

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[325] 'How different is the satisfaction of an anatomist, who discovers the use of the muscles and of the skin, the excellent contrivance of the one for the various movements of the body, and the wonderful texture of the other […] how different is this from the affection which possesses an ordinary man […]'. Burke, *Enquiry*, in *Writings*, I, p. 268.
[326] Bullard p. 90, 91.
[327] Sir William Temple, *Upon the Gardens of Epicurus: Or of Gardening in the Year* 1685, Bullard, p. 89; Bullard's nuanced understanding of Epicureanism draws yet another parallel from Burke to 'Lockean moral philosophy', Bullard p. 23.
[328] John Dennis, *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (London: Rich, Parker, 1701), p. 102.

Bullard explains: 'It [Epicureanism] would divert scholarly inquiry away from the moral, the miraculous, the eschatological and the incorporeal, towards the visible, physical world and its living inhabitants.'[329] Therefore, we can construe Epicurean characteristics as being antithetical to messages promoting empirical eschatological comprehension of God and religion.

Bullard refers to the Epicurean characteristics in Burke's *Enquiry* as participating in an attempt to assimilate aspects of Epicureanism (e.g. 'its humane materialism') 'into the Christian realm of intellectual respectability'.[330] I believe that the aspects of Epicureanism in Burke's *Enquiry* are approximate to the 'secular adaptations […] deployed by Anglicans against the Deists' observed by Hampshire-Monk—inasmuch as they are adaptations aligned with thinking that is antithetical to established religion.[331] However, I would extend this observation to include adaptations to Deistic thinking and non-God-centred thinking—themes conceivably antithetical to the Christian theme that have been integrated into the Christian realm as modifications made to weather confrontation with modernization.

Founded in Athens, Epicureanism is an ancient school of philosophy, 'the philosophical system of Epicurus' [wherein the] ultimate pleasure was held to be freedom from anxiety and mental pain, especially that arising from needless fear of death and of the gods.[332] However, as we have seen above, in the human conceptualization of God the first and most natural response is fear; it is unavoidable. Bullard's definition of Epicureanism is more applicable to Burke; he outlines its basic precepts:

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[329] Bullard, p. 89.
[330] *Ibid.*, p. 90.
[331] Hampshire-Monk, 'Skeptical Conservatism', p. 259.
[332] Oxford English Dictionary, 'Epicureanism', c. 1751-1829, <http://www.oed.com/>, [June 28th, 2012].

> The first, as we have seen, was that we live in a material universe of perpetual accumulation and dissolution, made up of randomly moving sub-visible atoms, uninformed by intellectual spirits of providential design. The second was that the gods, if they exist as anything more than images of perfection in human dreams, are extraterrestrial beings that lack either the will or the ability to intervene in mundane affairs. The third was that human motive is circumscribed by the urge to pursue pleasure and avoid pain, and that all doctrines of justice, duty and self-restraint are soon reduced to those simple realities.[333]

I think if we are to understand Burke's representation of religion, we can further articulate these Epicurean precepts in modernity: if we conceptualize a universe that is perpetually accumulating new information and identities and simultaneously dissolving them, this is Karl Marx's modernity, an epoch wherein there is 'uninterrupted disturbance of all social relations, everlasting uncertainty and agitation […]'.[334] Bullard's understanding of Epicureanism entails a universe uninformed by providential design; the deities (if they exist) lack the will to engage with human affairs. Burke's version of the sublime is highly subjective, unmitigated by a disinterested object (God), the Godhead is viewed as a theoretical example and almost unnecessary. The disinterested deity is also key to Barnett's definition of Deism, discussed above.[335] Burke's sublime resonates with the interpretation of the sublime by modernists, such as: Marshall Berman, Terry Eagleton, Paul Heelas, Phillip Blond, and John Milbank. Eagleton looks to Anthony

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[333] Bullard, p. 90; see also Catherine Wilson, *Epicureanism at the Origins of Modernity*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[334] Marx and Engels, *Manifesto*, p. 8.
[335] Barnett, p. 17.

Ashley-Cooper, third earl of Shaftesbury to discuss the sublime:

> Indeed Nature for Shaftesbury is itself the supreme artefact, brimful with all possibilities of being; and to know it is to share in both the creativity and the sublime disinterestedness of its Maker. The root of the idea of the aesthetic is thus theological: like the work of art, God and his world are autonomous, autotelic and utterly self-determining. The aesthetic is a suitably secularized version of the Almightly himself, not least in its blending of freedom and necessity.[336]

Eagleton's assessment of Shaftesbury above helps to understand Burke's thinking surrounding the 'Maker': Burke's offers versions of the sublime wherein the Godhead is not needed, removed, or disinterested; Burke's conceptualization of the sublime that depicts ideas antithetical to God-centred Christianity deconstructs to 'suitably secularized' thinking about divinity. Like Eagleton, Bullard too observes the Enlightenment's turn to subjectivity, in terms of aesthetics.[337] We can then observe a turn to subjectivity in terms of the Enlightenment mind's representation of religion and God.

Consider the way that Berman looks at Baudelaire's "Loss of a Halo"; it resonates with a conceptualization of the sublime wherein the Godhead is unnecessary.[338] When Baudelaire says of the artist that 'He has been his own king, his own priest, his own God', this resonates with the highly subjective nature of the modern sense of the sublime: an experience of the sublime that is subjective, in no need of the object. Heelas writes

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[336] Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 35.
[337] Bullard, p. 80.
[338] Charles Baudelaire, 'Loss of a Halo', in *Paris Spleen* (1869), as cited in Marshall Berman, p. 156.

that the modern subjective sublime is 'unmediated by objectivity'.[339] Blond sees modernity as causing theology to lose its object [God]: 'It can no longer point to anything with ostensive certainly and say the word, "God".'[340] Burke receives little more than a mention, by Heelas, Blond, and Milbank as to his contribution to aesthetic understanding of the sublime.[341] However, I think Milbank's thoughts on the modern sublime help to understand Burke's conceptually secularized version of sublimity:

> The second element of theological genealogy for the eventual separation of the sublime from the beautiful concerns the idea of the "disinterested" love of God. […] if our relation to God has ceased to be in any sense a matter of hope—since of course God himself is not in need of hope—then has not this relationship become strikingly depersonalized? […] A god who offers only a "cold love" is thereby "objectified", just as if he is the object only of our "cold love", he is rendered abstract and empty.[342]

Burke's religious language abstracts concepts of God; it blends boundaries between the sacred and profane. Burke's softening of religious boundaries, as seen above, is characteristic of eighteenth-century diffusive Christianity distinctive to modernity described by Jeffrey Cox. Cox compares the apathy about religion in the twentieth century to a similar occasion in the eighteenth century:

> But whatever major problems the churches faced, outright unbelief was not one of them. Direct evidence is virtually non-existent, but a variety of

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[339] Heelas, p. 15.
[340] Blond, (p. 285).
[341] Milbank, p. 263.
[342] *Ibid.*, p. 265, 267; Hans Urs von Balthasar also writes about the love of a disinterested Deity in *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, IV: The Realm of Metaphysics in Antiquity*, trans. by Brian McNeil, (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1989), p. 496–531.

> religious professionals, describing what they were up against, sketched the outlines of a "diffusive Christianity" which comprised a general belief in God, a conviction that this God was both just and benevolent although remote from everyday concerns, a certain confidence that "good people" would be taken care of in the life to come, and a belief that the Bible was a uniquely worthwhile book and that children in particular should be exposed to its teachings.[343]

The diluting of Christianity described by Cox shows that, in eighteenth-century terms, it is not so tenuous to connect or blend differing forms of Christian heterodoxy; as Clark suggests above, referring to Deism as disguised atheism: for example, the likes of Theologian Richard Bentley regarded all forms of dissent and freethinking as atheism.[344] Therefore, from recognizing Deism in Burke's conceptualizations surrounding religious ideas, we can recognize other characteristics antithetical to Christian orthodoxy. Observations made by David Berman explain how a diluted, expanded treatment of the religious can amount to the irreligious or atheistic manifestations as Israel describes above. Berman describes Radicati's *Twelve discourses concerning Religion and Government* (2nd edn. 1734, Albert Radicati, Count of Passeron): 'His concept of God is so expanded that virtually every account of the world must be deistic or theistic.'[345] The following is from Radicati's text:

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[343] Jeffrey Cox, *The English Churches in a Secular Society, Lambeth 1870–1930*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 94.
[344] See Richard Bentley's *The Folly and Unreasonableness of Atheism: Demonstrated from the Advantage and Pleasure of Religious Life, The Faculties of Human Souls, The Structure of Animate Bodies, & The Origin and Frame of the World*, (London: H. Mortlock, 1693).
[345] David Berman, *A History of Atheism in Britain From Hobbes to Russell*, (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 94.

> […] to say that Deists are Atheists is false; for they that are so called by the Vulgar, and by those whose interest it is to decry them, admit a first cause under the names of God, Nature, Eternal Being, Matter, universal Motion or Soul. Such were Democritus, Epicurus, Diogoras, Lucian, Socrates, Anaxagoras, Seneca, Hobbes, Blount, Spinosa, Vanini, St Evremond, Bayle Collins, and in general all that go under the name of Speculative Atheists; and none but fools or madmen can ever deny it. So that the word Atheist must signify Deist, if nothing. There being no such thing as an Atheist in the world as the Ignorant imagine, and the crafty Priests would have believed, when they brand with this odious name such as detect their impostures.[346]

Berman says that Radicati is an atheist because his *Philosophical Dissertation upon Death* (1732) equates God with the material world. So, according to Berman, a description of God that is so expanded as to deem him unnecessary, or one that is rooted in material or worldly descriptors, is ultimately atheistic: 'Though it contains denial of God's existence or avowal of atheism, the *Philosophical Dissertation* [from Radicati] is atheistic in all but name.'[347] It follows that Burke's abstracted treatment of God and religious boundaries validates the recognition of Deistic, secular, or even atheistic, qualities within Burke's early thinking concerning religion. It is unlikely that Berman is suggesting that every single expanded Deistic description of God amounts to atheism; however, qualifying God in expanding, boundless, terms (the way Burke does above)

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[346] Alberto Radicati di Passerano, *Twelve discourses concerning Religion and Government, Inscribed to all Lovers of Truth and Liberty*, 2nd edn., (London, 1734), pp. 11–12.
[347] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

conceivably deconstructs and subverts the very concept of God-centred Christian orthodoxy. The subversive non-God-centred assimilations in Burke's language indicate the paradoxical ossification and erosion of religious concepts in modernity.

Eagleton writes about the modern paradox of social order in a way that resonates with the undermining paradox evident in Burke's religious language: 'The very conditions which guarantee social order also paralyses it'.[348] It is this sort of paradox that I argue is prevalent throughout Burke's writing—especially within his treatment of religion(s). The very language he uses to elevate a God-centred religious establishment undermines it. Eagleton suggests a similar paradox about the sublime:

> The sublime is the anti-social condition of all sociality, the infinitely unrepresentable which spurs us on to yet finer representations, the lawless masculine force which violates yet perpetually renews the feminine enclosure of beauty.[349]

I argue that Burke's conceptualization of sublime awe subverts the capacity for social order in religion, his obscuring of God invites sects of heterodoxy (e.g. Deism) that further obscure the systems of manners and practice promoted by religion. Eagleton deconstructs Burke's sublime into a political paradox of pain versus pleasure, man versus woman: 'The political paradox is plain: only love will truly win us to the law, but this love will erode the law to nothing.'[350] I observe a religious paradox that increased inclusion of differing conceptualizations (or anti-conceptualizations) of God erodes the concept of God into empty abstraction. The inclusion of differing conceptualizations of

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[348] Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 55.
[349] *Ibid.*, p. 54.
[350] *Ibid.*, p. 55.

awe and God is abstracted even further in the major publication that follows his *Vindication* and his *Enquiry*. In his *Account of the European Settlements in America* (1757), Burke further erodes religious boundaries by elevating the sacredness of non-Christian ideologies. This, I argue, contributes to an interpretation of Burke as a progenitor of progressive Enlightenment.

***Account*: The expanded representation of God; the legitimization of non-Christian religious practice, relative to indigenous culture**

Eagleton writes about Burke's thinking on law, and the cultural prejudice that precedes it; he argues that Burke is 'resolutely anti-Enlightenment in [the] belief that cultural predilection or pre-understanding is the framework of all more formalized knowledge.'[351] I dispute the interpretation of Burke as an anti-Enlightenment reactionary; I believe we can view Burke as progressive by looking at his thinking concerning religion. While Burke's value of religious identity is grounded in a cultural basis, it is less about a certain sect being predisposed to a certain framework of feeling, and more about the destructiveness in deracinating an established framework of belief. Burke's thinking about religion proves this: if Burke thought that certain cultures were predisposed to certain frameworks of law or governance, then he would have supported the concept of 'Geographical morality' argued by the Hastings defence in his impeachment trial.[352] While this thesis includes a discussion of Burke's engagement with India and the Hastings trial in the next chapter, I will mention now that we know that he opposed the

[351] Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 42.
[352] Edmund Burke, *The launching of the Hastings Impeachment* (1786 – 1788), 'Opening of Impeachment', (16, February 1788) in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: India: The Launching of the Hastings Impeachment 1786 – 1788*, ed. by Paul Langford, P.J. Marshall, and William B. Todd, 9 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), VI**,** pp. 312–72, (p. 346).

idea of prejudiced morality and justice. If we look at Burke's thinking about religious cultural identities, we will see that its cultural base is about freedom and enfranchisement, and less about prejudice.

Frohnen makes too much of the 'prescriptive' nature of Burke's anti-Enlightenment Conservative conceptualization of law.[353] However, others have interpreted Burke's thoughts concerning law and legislation more fairly: Bullard shows that Burke was alive to culturally aware legislation. He looks at Burke's speeches on America from the 1770s to illustrate that, for Burke, appropriate rhetoric is linked with appropriate legislative approach—that it should attend to the character and disposition of the colonists.[354] If we unveil more of the quote Bullard reads, I believe we can see another dimension:

> The object is wholly new in the world. It is singular: it is grown up to this magnitude and importance within the memory of man; nothing in history is parallel to it. All the reasonings about it, that are likely to be at all solid, must be drawn from its actual circumstances. In this new system, a principle of commerce, of artificial commerce, must predominate. […] People must be governed in a manner agreeable to their temper and disposition; and men of free character and spirit must be ruled with, at least, some condescension to this spirit and this character.[355]

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[353] Frohnen, p. 63.
[354] Bullard, p. 10.
[355] Edmund Burke, *Observations on a Late state of the Nation* (1769), in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: Party, Parliament and the American Crisis, 1766–1774*, ed. by Paul Langford, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), II, p. 194.

There is scope for understanding the religious context of this culturally aware approach. Eagleton writes about an aestheticized morality in the eighteenth century; manners are the manifestation of aestheticized morality in social conduct, upon which law depends.[356] For Burke, behaviour is guided from the surface inward through imitation. The *Enquiry* argues that imitation '[…] is one of the strongest links of society […] This forms our manners, our opinions, our lives […]'[357] In other words, manners are agreed-upon behaviours, grounded in cultural compliance. When we think of the temperament and disposition of a governed people, we are essentially thinking about the shared manners of a people; the shared manners manifest in agreed-upon religious practice. Before Burke's days in parliament, however, before the writings and speeches surrounding imperial operations in the colonies, we can see Burke's awareness of the religious culture of non-Christian sects.

In Burke's *Account*, he describes the commonality between differing sects of indigenous Americans—relative to culture:

> The Aborigines of America, throughout the whole extent of the two vast continents which they inhabit, and amongst the infinite number of nations and tribes into which they are divided, differ very little from each other in their manners and customs, and they all form a very striking picture of the most distant antiquity.[358]

He goes on to represent a relative cultural legitimacy in the manners and customs of the indigenous American natives in terms of their religious practices—non-Christian

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[356] Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 42.
[357] Burke, *Enquiry*, in *Writings*, I, p. 224; see also Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 42.
[358] William Burke and Edmund Burke, *An account of the European settlements in America,* 2 vols, (Dodsley: London, 1757), I, *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, Gale Group, July 1, 2012, p. 161.

religious practices:

> It must not be denied that they have the use of some specifics of wonderful efficacy; the power of which they however attribute to the magical ceremonies with which they are constantly administered.[359]

Burke explains above that the indigenous population of America finds legitimacy for their ceremonies in distant antiquity; their beliefs are established in cultural tradition. This description lends legitimacy to non-Christian religious sects. Burke also finds cultural legitimacy in sects of these indigenous peoples who (according to his thinking) do not acknowledge a God; others, acknowledge a generalized supreme deity:

> Some appear to have very little idea of God. Others entertain better notions; they hold the existence of a Supreme Being, eternal and incorruptible, who has power over all.[360]

Here, we see that Burke favours a sect that would acknowledge some kind of supreme deity, rather than none at all; which resonates with the message in his *Vindication*—that a violent religion is better than none at all. The acknowledgment of an expanded notion of God in this passage also rings with the abstracted conceptualization of God in Burke's *Enquiry*. Burke's *Account* emphasises 'Liberty in its fullest extend is the darling passion of the Americans. To this they sacrifice every thing.'[361] When he highlights the value of liberty for this indigenous population, it resonates with the increase in value placed on religious freedom in modernity, observed by Carlson and Owens above. Burke's legitimization of non-Christian sects becomes more pronounced when he engages with

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[359] Burke, *Account*, p. 168.
[360] *Ibid.*, p. 167.
[361] Burke, *Account*, p. 169.

Indian affairs; the next chapter of this thesis will show how Burke conveys equal legitimization for Christian and non-Christian sects.

Burke's *Account,* also engages with the concept of awe in a way that aligns it with the *Vindication* and his *Enquiry*. The focus on the awe of God, as well as the awe of political figures and nature, is of particular interest to Burke's thinking about awe as a method of thwarting despotism. The language from this definition is similar to the awe Burke writes about in his *Enquiry*, as being sourced from sovereigns.[362] In his *Account,* Burke recounts the story of Francis Pizarro, an early Spanish explorer of Peru who laboured in conquering the native people. Burke describes him as 'a barbarous prince, who was far from being a consummate politician,' who intended to achieve submission through terror.[363] Pizarro did not know when to quell his thirst for political power, and thereby met his demise (through his beheading).[364] Burke writes of Pizarro's story that it 'is a striking example how necessary it is for a great man to have an awe upon him from some opposition that may keep his prudence alive, and teach him to have a watch upon his passions'.[365] Burke argues that it is important to instil 'awe upon' such a 'great man' that he may remember to 'watch upon his passions'.

This observation is very like the example from Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* in which he explains the powers of religion in restraining despotism. Earlier, this chapter included a discussion of Montesquieu's story of the King of France from his *Persian Letters*, in which he describes religion's power to instil 'awe' the 'great man' in the form of a 'powerful magician […] called the Pope,' who makes him believe that things are not

[362] Burke, *Enquiry*, *Writings*, vol. i., p. 238.
[363] Burke, *Account*, p. 149.
[364] *Ibid.*, p. 150.
[365] *Ibid.*, p. 150.

what they seem: (e.g., bread is flesh, and wine is blood).[366] Montesquieu's description is not only quite brazen in its mockery of Catholic doctrine, but also it illustrates religion's restraining power over a monarch. According to Burke's view, this sort of restraint used against a monarch is 'necessary'; it is further carried out by bestowing 'awe upon him'.

Conclusion to Chapter 1

If the seventeenth century ossified concepts, such as the Episcopal Polity of the established church (in the Act of Uniformity, 1662, and the 1688 revolution), perhaps then we can construe certain events in the eighteenth century as contributing to a softening of these concepts. From increased measures in tolerance for Christian heterodoxy (by way of the Toleration Acts of 1689, 1779), and the age of revolution (which entailed the secular upheaval of religious establishment during the French Revolution, along with the re-shaping of the laws governing Catholics with the repeal of the Test Act(s) of 1673–78, and the 1778 Catholic Relief Act), we can see how Zygmunt Bauman observes the solids of ancient development liquefying or 'coming apart at the seams […]', by the eighteenth century.[367] Bauman's metaphor of liquefying solids is aligned with Hume's eighteenth-century definition of 'our modern expedient', inasmuch as both ideas amount to ancient practices being laid to waste, at times without regard for posterity.[368] Burke's representation of established religious culture in his early writings operates in this paradigm: the ancient establishment of the Anglican Church under threat from the modern expedient of Christian heterodoxy. Returning to Marshall Berman's framework of modernity: in these early writings, it is clear that Burke is 'frightened by

[366] Montesquieu, *Persian letters*, p. 40.
[367] Bauman, p. 3.
[368] Hume, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, p. 361.

the nihilistic depths to which so many modern adventures lead' (e.g. the potential danger in rational religion and Christian heterodoxy); yet, he is 'alive to new possibilities' (e.g., Deistic representations of awe and conceptions of awe less dependent on a deity altogether).[369] In Burke's *Vindication* and *Enquiry*, I have shown that his language demotes, dilutes, and even removes, the necessity for one's conceptualization of God; I have shown how this resonates with ideologies antithetical to established religion (e.g., Freethinking, Deism, and non-God-centred themes). Burke's *Account*, like his *Enquiry*, welcomes expanded interpretations of God, and begins to lend relative cultural legitimacy to non-Christian sects. I believe that engagement with these ideologies conceptually subverts Protestant, Christ-centred, ideology, and demonstrates a certain progressiveness or willingness to modify as an act of preservation against the threat of the modern expedient—rather than a Christ-centred Conservative resistance to progression.

By the 1760s, Burke is a politician. In my next chapter, we will see how Burke carries over his representation of religious culture (as set down in the literature of the 1750s) into real practice, when he confronts the events in India and Ireland.

[369] Marshall Berman, p. 14.

Ch. 2: 'Religious culture struggle in the shifting sands of modernity: The writings on India and Ireland'

Introduction

This second chapter of my thesis is an examination of Burke's writings from the 1770s and 1780s—his thoughts surrounding India and Ireland. To my mind, scholarship of Burke's writings on India and Ireland is lacking in attention to a global religious context. My critical analysis of these writings in this chapter are intended to fill this void. First, I will look at Burke's Indian writings: Madras and Bengal (1774–85) and the launching of the Hastings Impeachment (1786–88). I will demonstrate how Burke's conception of religion(s) transcends simple toleration, reaching closer to progressive multiculturalism. Second, I show how Burke's multicultural approach to indigenous religious governance in India resonates with his treatment of Catholic emancipation in his Irish writings: his *Tracts relating to Popery Laws* (1765), the *Letter to Lord Kenmare* (1782), his *Letter To Sir Hercules Langrishe: The Roman Catholics Of Ireland* (1792), and the *Second letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe on the Catholic Question,* (1795). I argue that the writings on Ireland and India both display struggle between the preservation of indigenous religious culture, very modern in its placement at the threshold of early globalization.

In my critical interpretation of Burke's writings on Ireland, I counter interpretations of Burke that overemphasise his potential Catholic connections: as we shall see from O'Brien, Eamonn O'Flaherty, Luke Gibbons, and Thomas H.D. Mahoney. My readings of Burke's Irish writings, and their connection with his Indian writings, differ from conventional readings of Burke's Irish writings in the following way: instead

of wondering (as the above critics do) about the potential depth of Burke's Catholic roots, I wonder about the stability of cultural roots in the eighteenth century, altogether. Consider Marshall Berman's description of modernity in the 1790s, 'an age that generates explosive upheavals in every dimension of personal, social and political life'.[370] Jonathan Israel also described the severing and demolition of cultural roots in the Enlightenment.[371] It is my position that wondering about the depth of Burke's suspect Catholic roots seems too speculative to stand in the inconstant religious culture of eighteenth-century modernity.

I will then show that Burke's representation of religious culture in these texts reveals some difficulties that resonate with conflicts discussed in more recent theories of modernity (including Zygmunt Bauman, Jonathan Israel, and Paul Heelas). For example, I believe we can think of the above texts as reflective of Bauman's and Israel's use of the term *kulturkampf* ('culture struggle') to encompass both religious struggles and struggles of the 'nation-state'.[372]

The contemporaneity of Burke's writings on Ireland and India warrants their treatment together. For example, Burke's response to the Catholic Relief Act of 1782 (in his *Letter to a Peer of Ireland*) falls just before Warren Hastings was arranged in 1788, and just after his *Enquiry into the Policy of Making conquests for the Mahometans in India* (1779)[373] His letter to Scottish Reverend John Erskine, concerning Catholic

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[370] Marshall Berman, p. 17.
[371] Israel, p. vi.
[372] OED, '*Kulturkampf*', *ibid*.; Bauman, p. 173; Israel, p. 14.
[373] Burke's response in his *Letter to a Peer of Ireland on the Penal Laws against Irish Catholics, Previous to the Late Repeal of a Part thereof in the session of the Irish Parliament, held in 1782*; in The works of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, collected in three volumes, Volume 3, (London, 1792), Eighteenth Century Collections Online, [August 1st 2012]; also as Letter to Lord Kenmare, in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, Part I: The Revolutionary War, 1794-1797, Part II: Ireland, 1794-1797*, ed. by

emancipation, was written in the same year (1779); his letters to Sir Hercules Langrishe, also concerning Catholic emancipation, (1792, 1795) fall closely behind the speeches given during the Hastings trial in the 1780s–90s.[374] In this chapter, I will look closely at these texts, among others.

Beyond the chronological closeness of these writings, there is a thematic closeness: scholars now habitually link Ireland and India in Burke's political thought, in terms of colonial rule and imperial practice. Conor Cruise O'Brien set a precedent for thematically linking major political endeavours of Burke's lifetime; he links Burke's political thinking about Ireland and India (along with America and France): 'The four themes were linked in his own mind'.[375] Luke Gibbons later suggests a similar linkage in Burke's political thought: 'If there is any train of thought linking Burke's indictments of colonial rule in Ireland, India, or America, it is the fatal logic whereby colonial regimes end up perpetuating the worst traits of the societies they endeavour to civilize […]'.[376] Seamus Deane's work on Burke's colonial thinking treats 'pollutions in Ireland and

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Paul Langford, R.B. McDowell, and William B. Todd, 9 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), IX, pp. 564–79; Edmund Burke, William Burke, *An enquiry into the policy of making conquests for the Mahometans in India, by the British arms; in answer to a pamphlet, intituled 'considerations on the conquest of Tanjore',* (1779), The second edition, (London, M.DCC.LXXIX), Eighteenth Century Collections Online, [August 1st, 2012]; also in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: India: Madras and Bengal 1774-1785*, ed. by Paul Langford, P.J. Marshall, and William B. Todd, 9 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), V.

[374] Edmund Burke, 'Letter to Rev. John Erskine', (April 1779), in *Correspondence of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke Between the Year 1744 and the period of his decease in 1797*, ed. by Charles William, Earl Fitzwilliam and Lieutenant General Sir Richard Bourke, K.C.B., 4 vols, (London: Francis and John Rivington, 1844), II, pp. 268–73; Edmund Burke, *A Letter To Sir Hercules Langrishe: The Roman Catholics Of Ireland* (1792), in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: The Revolutionary War, 1794-1797, and Ireland*, ed. by Paul Langford, R.B. McDowell, and William B. Todd, 9 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), IX, pp. 594–639; *Second letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe on the Catholic Question (*1795), *Ibid.*, pp. 666–70.

[375] O'Brien, p. 96.

[376] Gibbons, p. 2.

India' as veritably synonymous.[377] Jennifer G. Pitts follows suit, observing that 'Burke's writings on Ireland show that he understood a shared logic of exclusion to characterize Britain's colonial relations with its poor, Catholic neighbor as well as with the distant peoples of India'.[378] Other recent efforts in linking Burke's political thought about Ireland and India, from Brendan Simms and D.J.B. Trim, echoes back to O'Brien's, suggesting that the themes are 'inextricably interconnected in Burke's mind […]'.[379] Among others, the scholars above provide comprehensive analysis of the political link between these two themes (India and Ireland); none comprehensively analyse Burke's global conceptualization of religion(s) as it links the two themes, and what it reveals of the concept of religion in modernity. My analysis in this chapter is intended to remedy this inattention. Departing from the scholars above, my intention is not to understand historical or political questions; rather, I analyse Burke's writings on India and Ireland (and some on America and Quebec) to understand the way Burke represents his conceptualization of religion(s), and further, to understand how his representation of global religions in his writings and speeches contributes to modern representation of global religions. I suggest that in the rapidly shifting sands of modernity (specifically the eighteenth-century globalizing landscape) Burke preserves traditional religious culture(s) by diminishing cultural difference; however, the labels of universalism, pluralism or liberalism do not wholly encompass this thinking.[380]

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[377] Deane, p. 3.
[378] Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France,* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), p. 61.
[379] Brendan Simms, D.J.B. Trimm, *Humanitarian Intervention: A History*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 100.
[380] 'Universalism' is committed to 'concern for others without regard to national or other allegiances', Oxford English Dictionary, 'universalist', <http://www.oed.com/>, [February 12th, 2012]. The fourth definition for pluralism in the OED is 'The presence or tolerance of a diversity of ethnic or cultural groups

I believe that by examining the representation of religion in these writings, we see Burke's inclusive conceptualization of religion(s) perpetuating the progress of modernity—not reacting against it. I, therefore, argue against critical interpretations that would depict Burke as an anti-modern, reactionary, or over-emphasize the influence of his suspected Catholic identity. Deane, for example, when he links Ireland and India, conveys Burke as a man who 'sought and fought for an idea, even an ideal, of traditional authority which [he] felt was menaced, if not entirely overcome, by the hostile forces of a new world that had emerged as a consequence of the designed and revolutionary deformation of the old'.[381] I argue against the aspect of Deane's observation that perpetuates the narrow view of Burke as a reactionary, opposed to the deforming progress of modernity. We can interpret the softening of boundaries between religious sects, and the welcoming of civic freedom for sects diverging from traditional Anglican authority, as a sort of 'deformation of the old'.

Even the scholars who recognize a less conservative Burke still position him in opposition to the progress denoting modernity—to my mind, perpetuating a reactionary Burke. For example, while Gibbons notices the 'counter-currents' to Burke's Conservatism, he still focuses on Burke's response to the French Revolution to position him against progress and evidences his 'counter Enlightenment' leanings.[382] I will argue that Burke's open-mindedness and multicultural inclusiveness in his representation of global religions, in fact, position him as a progenitor of the progress that denotes

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with a society or state […]', Oxford English Dictionary, 'pluralism', <http://www.oed.com/>, [August 12th, 2012]. 'Support for or advocacy of individual rights, civil liberties, and reform tending towards individual freedom, democracy, or social equality […]'. Oxford English Dictionary, 'liberalism' <http://www.oed.com/>, [August 1st, 2012].

[381] Deane, p. Ix.

[382] Gibbons, pp., 15, 11.

modernity. Gibbons, Pitts, Simms and Trim, emphasise Burke's liberalism, evidenced in his Universalist leanings. I analyse these interpretations as well, arguing that enrolling Burke in liberalism is as equally restrictive as a limiting reactionary label, when it comes to our understanding of Burke. I believe that such exacting labels oversimplify Burke's thought; more dangerously, they set up a system of false alternatives, wherein Burke must be fixed with one label or the other. For these reasons, I prefer to think of the tension between such categorizations as characteristic of modernity, or what it means to be modern; as Marshall Berman explains: 'To be modern […] is to be both revolutionary and conservative […] to be fully modern is to be anti-modern […]'.[383]

Like others, Gibbons looks at Burke's aesthetic theory as manifested in his political thought; specifically Gibbons looks at the image of the mutilated body to ascertain Burke's understanding of terror in colonial practice—just as Eagleton does.[384] In his study, Gibbons remarks that Burke's prioritization of tradition has labelled him a 'patron saint' of Conservatism.[385] While Gibbons observes that it may be an oversimplification to evidence Burke's Conservatism in his prioritization of tradition, he argues that this prioritization may still support the construal of Burke's opposition to modernity:

> [While Burke may have] laid the basis for a more culturally sensitive version of the Enlightenment, at least where native or indigenous people were concerned—even if in the metropolitan centre, where tradition stood

[383] Marshall Berman, p. 14.
[384] e.g., Paddy Bullard, Stephen K. White, Richard Bourke, among others mentioned in the previous chapter; Gibbons, p. 39; see also Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 7–10.
[385] Gibbons, p. 168.

> for stability and order, such a position could be construed as an attack on modernity itself.[386]

Gibbons explains Burke's value of tradition did not indicate an opposition to political renovation: 'Rather, it [tradition] was [to Burke] a highly malleable form of life, adaptable to the circumstances of both time and place and answerable to the body and its social needs as well as the more cerebral demands of reason'[387] Essentially, Gibbons recognizes the 'counter-conservative currents' to Burke's political thought; I believe we can recognize the same in Burke's religious thought: his value of religious tradition does not mean he was opposed to its renovation or malleability. Gibbons' observation echoes Alfred Cobban, who highlights instances wherein Burke supports the need for political renovation: for example, the upheaval of the Warren Hastings administration in India.[388] However, Gibbons credits Burke's malleability as a political thinker, where I wish to interpret Burke as a quasi-religious thinker.[389] Cobban does mention a certain religious context behind Burke's counter-Conservatism, but solely as a medievalist figure contributing to a Christ-centred social order of Western Christendom.[390] I wish to demonstrate that we can also evidence Burke's malleability, his counter-Conservatism, in his religious thought; further, these counter-currents are not restricted to Christ-centred culture, but transcend boundaries of sect and nation.

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[386] *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 172.
[387] *Ibid.*, p. 169.
[388] Alfred Cobban, *Edmund Burke and the Revolt against the Eighteenth Century: a study of the political and social thinking of Burke, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1929), p. 100.
[389] Gibbons contrasts Burke with John Elster as a 'political theorist', p. 169.
[390] Cobban, p. 256; David P. Fidler and Jennifer Welsh also perceive Burke as a Chris-centred medieval thinker, p. 45.

Like White, Deane and others, Gibbons evidences a 'counter-Enlightenment' by looking at Burke's anxiety over the cost of losing tradition to the advances of modernity—Burke's 'refusal to countenance advances in civility and modernity that disavowed the cost of progress'.[391] While I agree that Burke expressed anxieties over the cost of progress (especially concerning the French Revolution, which I address in the next chapter), I believe studies of Burke that emphasize his anxiety toward the advances in modernity contribute to an image of an anti-modern, reactionary Burke. In this chapter, I will counter this image by demonstrating the progressiveness of his representation of global religions. To convey Burke's anxiety toward progress, Gibbons also makes use of twentieth century theorists to translate Burke's thought—his reactionary thought. He makes a very brief comparison to the way Burke construes the barbarism of the French Revolution and the way Zygmunt Bauman construes the 'barbarism of the Holocaust'.[392] I wish to offer some analysis that counterbalances Burke's opposition to progress, as evinced through a parallel drawn between Burke and Bauman. Instead, I will draw a parallel between Burke and Bauman (and others) to highlight a less reactionary Burke, alive to the anthropological sources of religious culture.[393] I wish to highlight Burke's particular method of preserving indigenous religious identity while highlighting the commonality to be found between differing sects. I believe Frederick G. Whelan's analysis of Burke's engagement with Indian culture applies not only to the way in which

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[391] Gibbons, p. 11.

[392] Gibbons, p. 184; Gibbons is referring to Zygmunt Bauman's *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

[393] While Gibbons' interpretation somewhat contributes to positioning Burke against the progression of modernity, he does observe his post-colonial influence in construing an aesthetic sublime (in Diderot, Voltaire, Raynal, and others), p. 177, 278; Other works mentioning the influence of the aesthetic function in Burke's political thought: Frank Ankersmidt, *Aesthetic Politics: Political Philosophy Beyond Fact and Value* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996); James Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an Age of Diversity*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

Burke represents non-Christian religions, but also non-Anglican Christian religions. Whelan refers to Burke's 'mixed rhetorical strategy of preserving some of India's exotic quality while at the same time trying to render its essential features familiar'.[394] Ultimately, I will argue that rendering religious cultural difference less distinguishable constitutes Burke's representation of global religions. I wish to show how his representation of global religions (to use Burke's words) 'softened, blended and harmonized the colours of the whole'.[395]

Before looking closely at the texts listed above (beginning with his writings on India) it is necessary to understand the background of Burke's involvement with Indian struggles, as well as the background to the struggles themselves.

India—Early globalization; Rendering Religious Features Familiar

By 1759, Burke embarks on a political career, as the personal secretary to William Gerard Hamilton, (MP for Petersfield, later to become chief secretary to Lord Halifax, Lieutenant of Ireland, from 1761, then Irish Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1763).[396] In 1765, Burke parted ways with Hamilton after a quarrel about his employment; he was later made secretary to Charles, Watson-Wentworth, second Marquess of Rockingham, upon the recommendation of Lord Cavendish.[397] The first Rockingham ministry fell a year later. The Rockingham Whig opposition was responsible for arguing in favour of conciliation with America, supporting measures for Catholic

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[394] Frederick G. Whelan, *Burke on India*, in *The Cambridge Companion to Edmund Burke*, ed. by David Dwan and Christopher J. Insole, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 168–81, (p. 172).
[395] Burke, *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*, *Writings*, IX, p. 248.
[396] Martyn J. Powel, 'Hamilton, William Gerard (1729/1796)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, July 19th, 2012. For more in-depth observations about Burke's transition into politics, see Walter D Love's 'Burke's Transition from a Literary to a Political Career', *Burke Newsletter*, 2 (1964–5).
[397] S. Ayling, *Edmund Burke: his life and opinions*, (London: John Murray Publishers, 1988), p. 19–20; F.P. Lock, 'Burke's Life', in *The Cambridge Companion to Edmund Burke*, ed. by David Dwan and Christopher J. Insole, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 15–27, (p. 17).

relief and trade with Ireland, and policing the chartered rights and operations of the East India Trading Company; it has often been suggested that Burke was a strong influence in shaping Rockingham Whig thinking, especially in terms of limiting the power of the monarchy.[398] Burke continued this thinking when he earned his seat as a Member of Parliament for Bristol in 1774: his support of Catholic relief, his conciliatory speeches about America, and a lack of funds, lost him his seat in 1780.[399] By 1782, the Rockingham Whigs were back in power, but Rockingham himself died only a few months into his second term. The fall of the previous North administration, Britain's defeat in the American Revolution, and Rockingham's death precipitated an intra-Whig divide: Charles James Fox, who was once aligned with Rockingham (and Burke) in the conciliatory posture toward America, would later lead a faction of Whigs, and bitterly disagree with Burke in their views over the French Revolution.[400] However, before this divide, Burke's political activity involved a long and laborious engagement with the East India Trading Company's governance: first in 1782 on a committee investigating the Company's activities in Calcutta, then in the seven-year impeachment trial of Warren Hastings. Hastings was arraigned in 1788, with twenty 'High Crimes and Misdemeanours' said to have taken place while he served as Governor General of India

[398] S.M. Farrell, 'Wentworth, Charles, Watson, second marquess of Rockingham (1730-1782), prime minister', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004, [July 19th, 2012]; White, p. 13; For more in-depth studies of Rockingham, see R.J.S. Hoffman, *The Marquis: A Study of Lord Rockingham, 1730-1782* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1973), and Francis O'Gorman, *The Rise of Party in England: the Rockingham Whigs, 1760-1782,* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975).

[399] Langford, 'Burke' ODNB, *ibid*.; e.g., Burke's *Speech on American Taxation* (19 April 1774), in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: Party, Parliament and the American Crisis, 1766–1774*, ed. by Paul Langford et al., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), II, pp. 406–61; and *Speech on Conciliation with America* (22 March 1775), in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. by Paul Langford et al., 9 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), III, pp. 102–69; Lock, 'Burke's Life', p. 21.

[400] Farrell, 'Rockingham', ODNB, *ibid*.; L.G. Mitchell, 'Fox, Charles James, (1749–1806)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004, [July 19th, 2012]; for more on Fox and the divide in the Whig party, see L.G. Mitchell, *Charles James Fox and the Disintegration of the Whig Party, 1782-1794*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1971).

(1773—84); impeachment was an uncommon legal practice in the eighteenth century, and he was eventually acquitted in 1795.[401]

A series of events (corruptions and warfare) had seen the British East India Company evolve from a commercial endeavour to a vehicle for cultural and financial exploitation. In summary, the commercial development of the Company intersected with political conflict in the Indian territories: struggles for power in Calcutta and Bengal between the French and British Trading Companies sparked the Carnatic Wars. The first conflict (1746–48) took place before Hastings arrived in Calcutta (in 1750). However, Hastings was involved in the 1757 conflict—the Plassey revolution—which obtained the governance of Calcutta for the Company. Hastings volunteered under Major General Robert Clive for this coup. Clive's army thwarted the rebellion lead by Siraj-al-duala; this then established the military supremacy of the British Company in Bengal, and placed Mir Jaffar on its throne. However, the Company demanded payment from the new Nawab for the protection it offered to the province. The need to appoint a British resident at Murishbad to enforce payment from the Nawab was filled by Hastings in 1758, and still occupied this seat when the British placed yet another Nawab at Bengal in 1760, Mir Kasim. This essentially allowed the Company officials financially to exploit the province, which led to its bankruptcy and violent measures of revenue collection from free-holders, workers, and others involved with the Company. It was Hastings' alleged participation in, or overseeing of, the Company's embezzlement, financial exploitation, and even the collection of revenues that largely made up the list of charges that ultimately led to his

[401] Langford, 'Burke' ODNB, *ibid*.; Lock, *Burke's Life*, p. 23; Paddy Bullard attributes Hastings' acquittal to 'Burke's principled attention to the character of Hastings and of his criminality, rather than to the establishment of his crimes as simple facts, leads to the failure of the impeachment.' Bullard, p. 132.

impeachment trial. Meanwhile, Mir Kasim and Hastings attempted to reach agreement regarding the rights of private trade with British merchants, but ultimately failed when violence erupted: Kasim was overthrown in 1764, and Hastings resigned from his post in 1765.

By 1771, the directors of the East India Trading Company were looking to appoint a new governor at Bengal. Hastings filled the post in 1772. The above series of British successes in overthrowing Indian Nawabs would serve as Hastings' model of sovereign company authority to make 'further incursions into areas of government allocated to the Nawabs'.[402] As governor, Hastings made maximizing the Company's revenue through steep taxation of other colonial provinces a priority; but 'his revenue administration was generally regarded as a failure'.[403] It is within Hastings' collection of revenue that most of the allegations of corruption rest. The minutes of the trial record Burke's description of the atrocities carried out by one of Hastings' collectors, Devi Sing:

> The wretched husbandmen were obliged to borrow money […] at six hundred per cent to satisfy him! Those who could not raise the money were most cruelty tortured: cords were drawn tight round their fingers, till the flesh of the four on each hand was actually incorporated, and become one solid mass; the fingers were then parted by wedges of iron and wood driven in between them.[404]

Hastings was also accused of the alleged judicial murder of the Indian official Nundcomar—or Nanda Kumar—who had previously accused Hastings of

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[402] P.J. Marshall, 'Hastings, Warren (1732–1818)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004, [April 4th, 2012].
[403] *Ibid*.
[404] *The Trial of Warren Hastings,* p. 39.

embezzlement.[405] Nundcomar was charged and found guilty of forgery, sentenced to death and executed. At the launching of the Hastings impeachment trial, Burke divulges this alleged corruption:

> He [Hastings] attempted to accuse Nundcomar of a conspiracy, which was a way he then and has ever since used, whenever means were taken to detect any of his iniquities. […] A man might be convicted as a Conspirator and yet live. He might put the matter into other hands, and go on with his Information. Nothing less than stone dead would do the business. And here happened an odd concurrence of circumstances. Long before Nundcomar preferred his charge, he knew that Mr. Hastings was plotting his ruin […] But the law took its course. I have nothing more to say than that the man is gone, justly if you please. It did so happen, luckily for Mr. Hastings; it so happened that Mr. Hastings's depositions and the justice of that Court, and the resolution never to relax, did all concur just at the happy nick and moment, and Mr. Hastings accordingly had the full benefit.[406]

Prior to the Hastings trial, Burke is known to have had knowledge of the region. P.J. Marshall observes that Burke is thought to have been an avid reader of travel accounts, even from early life.[407] David P. Fidler and Jennifer Welsh also observe that 'Burke was

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[405] Brian Smith, 'Edmund Burke, the Warren Hasting Trial, and the Moral Dimension of Corruption, *Polity*, 40, (2008), 70–95, p. 70. Also Encyclopaedia Britannica, <http://encyclopedia.jrank.org/NUM_ORC/NUNCOMAR.html>, [February 28th, 2010].
[406] Burke, *The Launching of the Hastings Impeachment*, 'Opening of Impeachment', in *Writings*, VI, pp. 390–91.
[407] Marshall, *Writings*, VI, p. 20.

not completely ignorant of India when he entered Parliament'.[408] Frederick G. Whelan makes the same observation—that Burke's awareness of non-Western, specifically Indian, cultures was unique:

> Burke was one of the first major European thinkers, and one of the first writers in the traditional canon of Western political theory, to have made a serious effort to understand a non-Western civilization and to incorporate his findings into his general political thought […] In taking India seriously, Burke was at the same time one of the first major Western thinkers to grapple with the moral and political problems of European empire-over non-Western nations.[409]

An observation made in a study by Jennifer G. Pitts, nearly ten years later, is indebted to Whelan's identification of Burke as an innovator—appreciating non-Western cultures. Pitts writes: Burke 'was arguably the first political thinker to undertake a comprehensive critique of British imperial practice in the name of justice for those who suffered from its moral and political exclusions'.[410] Some scholars have argued that Burke's appreciation of non-Western nations under Western governance as the incorporation of an enlarged liberal awareness was born out of sympathy for colonials (Gibbons, Bullard, Uday Singh Mehta).[411] To suggest that Burke's engagement with India is the ultimate realization of the sympathy he describes in his *Enquiry* is valid; yet, I am not sure that Burke's cultural inclusiveness is inspired entirely by sympathy. After all, welcoming diversity in the form

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[408] Fidler and Welsh, p. 18.
[409] Frederick G. Whelan, *Edmund Burke and India: Political Morality and Empire*, (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), p. 5.
[410] Pitts, p. 60.
[411] Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: a Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 170; Bullard, p. 109; Gibbons, 4, 12.

of non-Western civilizations is far less costly than excluding non-Western portions of the empire. To posit sympathy as the chief motivator for Burke's political positions underestimates his political acumen; specifically, to argue—as Conor Cruise O'Brien does—that Burke's position concerning India is motivated by a need to atone for abandoning his native Ireland and its religion feels like a fallacious argument to probability.[412] In any case, recognition of Burke's representation of global religions, as a critical imprint, in his literature concerning Ireland and India is missing from the conversation about Burke and imperialism (e.g. above, from Whelan and Pitts). Paul Heelas explains of modern religion: 'Religious exclusivism has, in measure, given way to religious inclusivism.'[413] I believe this articulates Burke's thinking about religion: progressing the empire through modernity means religious exclusivism must give way to religious inclusivism.

Even before the Hastings trial, Burke's conceptualization of global religions is expanded. Before the trial, Burke wrote *An Enquiry into the Policy of Making conquests for the Mahometans in India by the British Arms; in answer to a Pamphlet, intituled "Considerations on the Conquest of Tanjore"* (1779)—for William Burke's campaign as London agent for the Raja of Tanjore. This document called for an enquiry of the Company's actions in Tanjore; it argued the sovereignty of the Raja in response to John (and James) Macpherson's *Considerations on the conquest of Tanjore and the Restoration of the Rajah* (1779), which argued that Tanjore should again be under the rule of the Nawab. Citing the precedence of the 1762 treaty, which was an attempt to guarantee relations between the Raja and the Nawab, Burke refutes *the Considerations*:

[412] O'Brien, *Melody*, p. 271–72.
[413] Heelas, p. 3.

'It will not prove, that he [the Nawab] has the least particle of right to depose the King of Tanjore; or that it is either the duty of the interest of the English nation to put that kingdom under a Mahometan yoke'.[414]

Burke fortifies his argument for the sovereignty of the Hindu Raja by depicting distance between the religious cultures of the Hindoos (Hindus) and Mahometans (Muslims):

> I cannot help remarking, that this gentleman, (the author of the Considerations) and all those who engage in the cause of Mohamed Ali [the Nabob], in proposing schemes of government, and supporting rights of government in the East, are pleased to confine their attention solely to Princes, and to the rights of Princes. The wretched people are no part whatsoever of their consideration. Every man who knows any thing of India, must know the utter detestation those people entertain (I think with very good reason) but whether with good reason or not, they do most certainly entertain, of Mahometan government. To say nothing of the genius of that government in general, and in particular of the government of Mahomed Ali, it will he hardly believed, that all men do not infinitely prefer a subjection to Princes of their one blood, manners, and religion, to any other; that they will not be more obedient to such Princes; and that such Princes will not be reciprocally more tender of them. This natural and reciprocal partiality, is a matter of great consideration in all governments;

[414] Burke, *Policy of Making Conquests*, *Writings*, V, p. 48.

> but it is peculiarly so among those nations where there is no settled law or constitution, either to fix allegiance, or to restrain power.[415]

Burke suggests that the wretched people of India would be more inclined to engage the sort of reciprocal relationship necessary for balanced governance (in which the governed offer obedience in return for provision of protection on behalf of the sovereign) if their ruler were of their own blood and religion, and not a Mahometan. This argument follows one side of the rhetorical strategy Whelan describes above: Burke preserves the individual identities between Hindu and Muslim. The same scheme of separating individual religious cultures appears in his 1782 *Letter to a Peer of Ireland* (Lord Kenmare). Discussed later in this chapter, the letter about the Penal Laws against Irish Catholics argues: 'Never were the Members of one religious Sect fit to appoint the Pastors to another'.[416] The 1779 argument continues:

> If the Company, who under the name of alliance, or under even the name of subjectation to a Mogul, are in reality now the actual Sovereigns and Lords paramount of India, still choose, as hitherto they have done, and is in wisdom perhaps they ought to do, to have a dependant government interposed between them and the native people, it is both their interest and duty that it should be such as is congenial to the native inhabitants, correspondent to their manners, and soothing to their prejudices. The native Indians, under their own native government, are, to speak without prejudice, a far better people than the Mahometans; or than those who by living under Mahometans, become the depressed subjects, or the corrupted

[415] *Ibid.,* p. 113.
[416] Burke, *Letter to a Peer*, *Writings,* IX, p. 576.

> instruments of their tyranny; they are of far milder manners, more industrious, more tractable, and less enterprising.[417]

Burke argues the duty of the Company to provide the indigenous people with governance correspondent to their manners (i.e., the Company should ensure Indians are governed by established Hindu law, not encroaching Muslim law). Burke expands by arguing that Hindus governed by Hindus are more docile and less ambitious; it is therefore in the Company's best interest to give them religious freedom. While the ring of anti-Muslim sentiment would change later in Burke's writings on India, here. we see Burke treating differing religious cultures as separate and distinct.

Years later, in the opening speech of the Hastings' impeachment, we see the full mixed strategy that Whelan describes above, when Burke preserves individual religious culture, but also renders the cultures familiar to one another. The Hastings defence justifies its alleged mismanagement of the Company by contending that 'the exercise of arbitrary power' was culturally appropriate for India and that the geographical circumstance warranted different moral standards. Burke replies:

> […] we are to let your Lordships know that these Gentlemen have formed a plan of Geographical morality, by which the duties of men in public and private situations are not to be governed by their relations to the Great Governor of the Universe, or by their relations to men, but by climates, degrees of longitude and latitude, parallels not of life, but of latitudes. […] This geographical morality we do protest against. Mr Hastings shall not screen himself under it. And I hope and trust not a great many words will

[417] Burke, *Policy of Making Conquests*, *Writings*, V, p. 113.

> be necessary to satisfy your Lordships. But we think it necessary in justification of ourselves to declare that the laws of morality are the same everywhere, and that there is no action which would pass for an act of extortion, of peculation, of bribery, and of oppression in England, that is not an act of extortion, of peculation, of bribery, and oppression in Europe, Asia, Africa, and all the world over.[418]

First, referring to a 'Great Governor of the Universe' resonates with the same expanded conceptualization(s) of God discussed in Chapter 1 (from Burke's *Enquiry*, and his *Account*).[419] In addition, Burke renders the essential features of Christian and non-Christian religious cultures familiar when he represents a moral law that is the same across various nations. Burke continues, arguing later in his speech:

> We are all born into subjection, all born equally, high and low, governors and governed, in subjection to one great, immutable, pre-existent law, prior to all our devices, and prior to all our contrivances, paramount to our very being itself, by which we are knit and connected in the eternal frame of the universe, out of which we cannot stir.[420]

To suggest that there is a universal frame of law, under which all are born equally, proposes a relative commonality between various cultures; it renders the difference between religious cultures less distinctive. Even later in his speech, Burke renders the features of Asiatic non-Christian cultures familiar to European Christian cultures:

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[418] Burke, *The Launching of the Hastings Impeachment*, 'Opening of Impeachment', (15 February 1788), *Writings*, VI, p. 346.
[419] Burke's references to God throughout his *Enquiry* are expanded and obscured: 'the Deity', the Creator', and especially 'Godhead', *Enquiry*, in *Writings*, I, p. 239; Burke, *Account*, p. 167.
[420] Burke, *The Launching of the Hastings Impeachment*, 'Opening of Impeachment', *Writings*, VI, p. 350.

> But it is not here only that I must do justice to the East. I assert that their morality is equal to ours as regards the morality of Governors, father, superiors; and I challenge the world to shew, in any modern European book, more true morality and wisdom than is to be found in the writings of Asiatic men in high trusts, and who have been Counsellors to Princes. This is to be set against the geographical morality to which I have referred.[421]

His long argument against the geographic morality practiced by the Hastings administration asserts—especially in the passage directly above—the equal legitimacy of European and Asiatic morality, relative to cultural belief.

Returning to the earlier *Policy of Making Conquests* speech, we see again that Burke preserves the cultural difference between English and Muslim oppression in India.

> The Arabians, and Tartars, and Persians, and their Clans of Mussulmen, are full as rapacious, and infinitely more fierce and cruel, than the English who are sent to make their fortunes in India in a civil or military capacity. The English have neither the same disposition, nor the same degree of boldness, nor in many cases, even the same means of oppression. Without however disputing which is the more intolerable weight, it is certain, that no people can bear two such riders. It was our business to respect possession as the only title that can be valid, where a great empire is broken up; and the rather, as it is the title on which we ourselves stand. […] one of the last things in the world which we were justified in doing, was to encourage arbitrary and boundless pecuniary demands, under the

[421] *Ibid*. p. 361

> barbarous names of Nazirs, Crores, [ceremonial gifts], &c. &c. […] When we did this, then it became not the robbery of another, but our own. Extortion, always the endemial distemper of that part of the world, began to be aggravated in all its symptoms, when Asiatic avarice was supported by European arts and discipline.[422]

Above, Burke admits that the English are responsible for perpetuating extortion by supporting Muslim oppressors, but he argues that the English do not oppress by the same violent and rapacious means; which seems to suggest English oppression as the lesser in ferocity and cruelty of the 'two such riders'. However, later, in the beginning of the Hastings trial, Burke describes the oppression in India in a way that renders religious distinctions between English oppressors and Muslim oppressors less distinctive, or familiar to one another—to use Whelan's expression. Burke's criticism of Hastings' factious will, operating against eternal law, represents the Company's failure to reconcile established religious culture with the modern avarice of commerce:

> My Lords, I am to mention to you circumstances relative to these people. They were the original people of Hindostan, […] The Musselmans are nothing like them, They are the old inhabitants of the Country, and still more numerous, Whatever fault they may have, God forbid we should go to pass judgement upon people who formed their Laws and Institutions prior to our insect origins of yesterday. […] Their religion has made no Converts; their dominion no conquests; and in proportion as they were concentred within and hindered from spreading abroad, they have grown

[422] Burke, *Policy of Making Conquests*, *Writings*, V, pp. 113–114.

> to double the force and have existed against Bigotry, against persecution, against all the fury of Foreign Conquests, and almost against the fury and avarice of the English Dominion established among them.[423]

Burke renders less distinctive the difference between the tyrannous 'Musselmans' and the modern avarice of the English, while retaining the distinctive individuality of the old established Hindu inhabitants as separate. The 'insect origins' refers to the new (inexperienced, by comparison) English laws and institutions, as compared with the ancient and established laws and institutions of the Hindus. Stating that the Hindus have made no converts or conquests is an aspersion that categorizes the English Protestant Dominion alongside the Muslim dominion: dominions that have persecuted the Hindu people with their cultural bigotry, land and property conquests, religious conversions, and commercial avarice. In the same 1779 speech, Burke sustains that same sort of criticism—that it is none of the British government's affair to undermine a religious establishment that fosters social harmony, because of modern commercial greed:

> That form of Religious Institution connected with Government and Policy that makes a people happy and a Government flourishing (putting further considerations out of the way, which are not now our business), these are undoubtedly the test of any government; and I must appeal to the whole force of observation that, whatsoever wherever the Hindoo Religion has been established, that Country has been flourishing.[424]

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[423] Burke, *The Launching of the Hastings Impeachment*, 'Opening of Impeachment', *Writings*, VI, pp. 269–311, (p. 304–05).
[424] *Ibid.*, p. 305.

Burke's above concern with the avarice of modern commerce points to triangular culture struggle, which is ultimately religious in nature: British dominion over India, supporting Muslim governance, encroaches on the Hindu establishment.

It is my argument that the struggle of religious culture Burke describes above is evoked in the term *Kulturkampf*, recognized in more than one theory of modernity. Bauman describes the *Kulturkampf* of nationalism in a way that is quite familiar to the Indian struggle to which Burke attends above:

> The nation-state, after all, owed its success to the suppression of self-asserting communities; it fought tooth and nail against 'parochialism', local customs or 'dialects', promoting a unified language and historical memory at the expense of communal traditions; the more determined the state-initiated and state-supervised *Kulturkampf*, the fuller the nation-state success in the production of a 'natural community'.[425]

The arbitration of British nationalism in India struggles against a large and ancient force like the Hindu community; but tries to suppress religious enfranchisement. Jonathan Israel provides context for a *Kulturkampf* within the parameters of modernity that this thesis has been using—a culture struggle in the eighteenth century that is essentially religious in nature: a 'vast *Kulturkampf* between traditional, theologically sanctioned ideas about Man, God, and the universe and secular, mechanistic conceptions which stood independently of any theological sanction'.[426] I think Burke's representation of global religions above points to a conflict between preserving sacred established religions, and rendering their differences less prohibitive to eighteenth-century

[425] Bauman, p. 173.
[426] Israel, p. 14.

globalization, which is in the economic interest of the empire. With all of his criticism of the Company's misgovernment in India, Burke still advocated Britain's presence there.

Stephen K. White stresses 'Burke's unwillingness to raise broader questions about the overall legitimacy of Great Britain's domination of India.'[427] However, Burke clearly justifies Britain's presence in India, in firm providential terms: 'All these circumstances are not, I confess, very favourable to the idea of our attempting to govern India at all. However, there we are; there we are placed by the Sovereign Disposer: and we must do the best we can in our situation. The situation of man is the preceptor of his duty.'[428] Burke does not question Britain's duty in India, as it is ordained by God. However, he does take issue with the failure to execute Britain's providential duty according to God's will. Perhaps White misunderstands between patriotism and nationalism. Bauman's observations about the nation-state *Kulturkampf* of modernity will clarify:

> Nationalism locks the door, pulls out the door-knockers and disables the doorbells, declaring that only those who are inside have the right to be there and settle there for good. Patriotism is, at least on the face of it, more tolerant, hospitable and forthcoming—it passes the buck to those who ask admission.[429]

Burke's justification for Britain's governance in India is closer to patriotism; if we look at his religious thinking, we see that it is inclusive—aligning Christian with non-Christian religions. The abusive arbitrary power in the Hastings administration is exclusive and nationalistic. The following section is a close examination of these texts in

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[427] White, p. 36.
[428] Burke, *Fox's India Bill*, *Writings*, V, p. 404.
[429] Bauman, pp. 173–74, 177.

which Burke addresses the issue of the empire's encroachment on Catholicism: his correspondence, speeches, and posthumously published work.

Ireland—Religious Legitimacy, relative to indigenous culture; The Common Bond of Humanity

Eamonn O'Flaherty's argues that the main interest in Burke's Irish writings should be in his critique of the Penal code, as part of a 'body of constitutional and historical theory […] in the development of British policy towards Ireland within the empire', as opposed to the 'psychological commitment to the Irish Catholic case', which differs from Conor Cruise O'Brien's argument about the psychological pull Ireland had over Burke.[430] My interpretation of Burke's Irish writings leans more toward O'Flaherty's, in the sense that he sees the 'global significance in Burke's later thought which was parallel to its importance to the wider issues of justice in the Empire […]'.[431] In the following section, I focus on Burke's Irish texts in terms of their global, imperial significance, as opposed to their personal significance. This is not to say Burke's potential emotional ties with Ireland and his interest in its polity are mutually exclusive; rather, I wish to take a critical approach that avoids personal speculation. Avoiding speculation over Burke's personal history guards against a fallacious appeal to probability, and against the abstraction of Burke's religious thought; it becomes easy to apply ill-fitting labels when speculating about his past, e.g. a secret Catholic, latent liberal, reactionary-conservative. However, the global significance of Burke's thoughts on Catholicism is present not only, as O'Flaherty suggests, in Burke's later thoughts on Ireland, but reaches back to his early writings on the subject—for example, his *Tracts*

[430] O'Flaherty, p. 10, 11; O'Brien, p. xxvi.
[431] O'Flaherty, p. 10.

relating to Popery Laws (1765), and over to Burke's thoughts in the Quebec Act (1774); both examples predate the Hastings trial and the other writings on India discussed above.

O'Brien makes the claim that Burke was emotionally and psychologically attached to Ireland—the land, its people, and its culture within which its religion was ingrained.[432] While O'Flaherty deserves credit for questioning the central importance of Burke's personal connection where his treatment of Catholicism is concerned, like O'Brien, he also may depend too much on Burke's Catholic roots:

> Burke's thoughts on the Catholic question in his last years were affected also by an increasingly religious theme in his discussion of Catholicism, part of his general belief in the importance of religion as a counter-revolutionary force, but also evidence of the depth of his roots in Catholic Ireland of the eighteenth century.[433]

It is true that Burke's Catholic familial connections provide a personal context about which we may ponder any Catholic allegiances: his mother Mary Nagel was Catholic; indeed, Burke spent much of his childhood in Ireland living with his mother's Catholic family in the Blackwater valley. His sister, Juliana, was baptised and remained Roman Catholic for the duration of her life. His wife Jane Nugent was the daughter of a Catholic physician.[434] It is O'Brien's observations about Burke's father, Richard, that are the most speculative: thought to have converted from Catholicism to Protestantism for professional advancement, O'Brien even goes so far as to suggest the possibility that

[432] O'Brien, p. xxvi.
[433] O'Flaherty, pp. 26–27.
[434] Langford, 'Burke', ODNB, *ibid*.

Richard encouraged his son to do the same.[435] Edmund's own son, Richard, came to serve as an agent to the Catholic Committee in Dublin in 1792. Burke's peers in Parliament accused him of 'crypto-Popery'—erroneously suggesting that Burke concealed his Catholic allegiance cultivated from an education at the Catholic College of St. Omer in France.[436] Therefore, there is enough room for speculation about Burke's personal Catholic allegiances. Like O'Brien and O'Flaherty, Gibbons relies heavily on 'the milieu of Burke's own upbringing in the Nagle country of Co. Cork', arguing its significance in the formulation of his aesthetic theory.[437] Gibbons (also like O'Brien and others) suspects an emotional divide between Burke's political persona and his 'emotional loyalties in Ireland'.[438]

It is my view that lack of documentary evidence makes little possible beyond well-informed speculation when it comes to the depth of Burke's Catholic roots. It is my argument that such an assessment restricts the interpretation of Burke's Irish texts within only speculative parameters, rather than expanding it to consider Burke's global, transcultural, conceptualization of religion. Wondering about Burke's intimate feelings about Catholicism is far too speculative to my mind; such speculation reaches beyond the scope of this study, and is better left to a biographical enterprise. I disagree with O'Brien, O'Flaherty, Gibbons, and others who would suggest that Burke's support of Catholic enfranchisement (and further, his support for the Indian people) is solely motivated by familial connection (or latent guilt for abandoning a religion, to which there is little proof

[435] O'Brien, p. 4, 5.
[436] Clark, Introduction to *Reflections*, p. 25.
[437] Gibbons, p. 88.
[438] *Ibid.*, p. 23; Canavan, p. 1; Also, Katherine O'Donnell focuses on Burke's Gaelic background in 'The Image of a Relationship in Blood: *Parliament na mBan* and Burke's Jacobite Politics', *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 15, (2000), 98–119.

beyond guessing to suggest he belonged). O'Brien, for example, suggests that Burke 'betrayed India like his father betrayed Ireland'.[439] It is a highly speculative argument to suggest, as O'Brien does, that Burke's support of Indian enfranchisement was displaced support for Catholic enfranchisement.[440] I argue that giving so much importance to Burke's potential Catholic roots risks underestimating his knowledge of cultural and political prudence. I do not wish to dispute the observations about Burke's Catholic connections in Ireland made by O'Brien, O'Faherty, and Thomas H.D. Mahoney; rather, I wish to use them to build an analysis of Burke's writings on Ireland that focuses on his representation of global religious culture—the critical imprint of Burke's inclusive conceptualization of religion. Before looking closely at Burke's Irish writings, some background to the Catholic question must be considered.

In Great Britain and Ireland, the passing of the first Catholic Relief Act occurred in 1778. Also known as the Papists Act, it allowed for Catholic ownership of property and land, with the proviso of declaration of loyalty to the Protestant sovereign and an abjuration of Stewart claims to the throne. Those taking the oath were free from the penalties of the Popery Act of 1698, which threatened practitioners of Catholicism with imprisonment.[441] Burke supported the relief act, and voted in favour of free trade with Ireland that same year. His support for the relief of Penal laws resulted in the loss of his electoral seat at Bristol in September 1780. In June of that same year, anti-Catholic sentiment erupted into the famous Gordon Riots of 1780, during which hundreds were

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[439] O'Brien, *Melody,* p. 271–72.
[440] 'Feelings which Burke represses over Ireland come out in other contexts, over the French Revolution to some extent, but especially over India'. O'Brien, p. xxvi.
[441] W.C. Costin and J. Steven Watson, *The Law and Working of the Constitution: Documents 1660-1914*, ed. W.C. Costin and J. Steven Watson, 2 vols, (London: A&C Black, 1952), I, p. 90–91.

killed. The rioters were angry at the concessions granted to Catholics in the Relief Act of 1778, legislation introduced by Sir George Savile.[442] Eagleton summarizes the public fear of Catholicism evolving into a tyrannical faction if relieved of restricting legislation: 'In so far as Catholics are already slaves, then, they need to be doubly oppressed, by Protestant liberty as well as by Romish rule, in order to prevent them from coming to power and behaving as tyrants'.[443] For nearly a week, anti-Catholic mobs rampaged throughout London, burning and looting known Catholic buildings and residences.[444] Burke himself is said to have not only participated in the armed defence of residences, but also to have stood against mobs – during an encounter with a mob on St. Martin's street in London Burke was reported to have heroically defended his stance in support of the Catholic Relief Act, with a sword.[445] He wrote to Richard Shackleton on the 13th of June that year: 'During that Week of Havock and Destruction […] I spent part of the next day in the street amidst this wild assembly into whose hands I delivered myself informing them who I was […].'[446]

The Gordon riots were, however, not the first eruptions of violence concerning Catholicism that Burke had known: the Whiteboys in Ireland violently defended farmer and tenant rights. The first 'outbreak', 1761–63, resulted in the arrest of 237 suspects, the

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[442] For an expansive study on the evolution of Catholic emancipation, see R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972*, (London: Penguin, 1988). For a study linking the anti-Catholic violence of the Gordon riots and the violence of the French revolution in Burke's *Reflections*, see Iain McCalman, 'Mad Lord George and Madame La Motte: Riot and Sexuality in the Genesis of Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France', *Journal of British Studies*, 35 (1996), 343–67.
[443] Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 35.
[444] For a more detailed discussion of the Gordon Riots, see Ian Haywood and John Seed's, *The Gordon Riots: Politics, Culture and Insurrection in Late Eighteenth-Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
[445] John Paul DeCastro, *The Gordon Riots*, (H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1926), p. 65, 164.
[446] Edmund Burke to Richard Shackleton, 13 June 1780, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke, Part 1, Additional and Undated Letters*, IV, ed. by R. B. McDowell & John A. Woods, (Chicago: Chicago University Press 1970), pp. 245–46.

execution of seventy-four in total (between 1762–65, and then 1770–76).[447] While there has been doubt about Burke's actual connection with these affairs, Joseph and Garret Nagle (maternal relations to Burke) were named as informers for the Jacobite cause in Munster; Burke's father Richard (perhaps) acted as an attorney for Jacobite sympathizer James Cotter, who was executed in 1720.[448] While Gibbons sees Burke's family connections with the legal affairs of Cotter as being 'formative' to his political thinking, F.P. Lock doubts the validity of some of this specifically, Burke's father acting as attorney, which supports my view of the tenuousness of Burke's Catholic roots.[449]

As far as Burke's writings on the issue, this discussion places Burke's *Tracts relating to Popery Laws* after some of his later Irish texts, as they were not published in his lifetime. While the *Tracts* were written in the 1760s (possibly earlier), and likely read by Lord Kenmare of the Catholic Committee in the 1780s, it stands to reason that Burke's writings on Ireland dated during his engagement with India (the 1770s to the 1790s) hold the strongest resemblance to his writings in India.[450]

In his first letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe of the Irish Privy Council in January of 1792, Burke expresses concern over the limited scope of the 1782 (and implicitly, the

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[447] S.J. Connoly, *Religion, Law and Power: the Making of Protestant Ireland*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 223. For a detailed look at penal law resistance and more on the Whiteboys, see Connoly, and L.M. Cullen, 'The Blackwater Catholics and County Cork Society and Politics in the Eighteenth Century', in *Cork: History and Society*, ed. by Cornelius Buttimer and Patrick Flanagan, (Dublin: Geographia, 1993), pp. 535–84, (p. 568). For more on Irish enfranchisement, followed through to the United Irishmen and the uprising, see R.B. McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution, 1760–1801* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 371.

[448] L.M. Cullen thinks that Garret Nagle's seat in Dublin Castle may have contributed to the Protestant opposition to Catholic reform, in 'Burke's Irish Views and Writings', in *Edmund Burke, His Life and Legacy*, ed. by Ian Crowe, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1997), pp. 62–75, (pp. 63–64).

[449] Gibbons, p. 24; F.P. Lock doubts this in *Edmund Burke 1730-1784–84*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 6–7.

[450] Introduction to Langford's edition of *Tracts relating to Popery Laws* (1765), in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: I: The Revolutionary War, II: Ireland, 1794-1797*, ed. by Paul Langford, R.B. McDowell, and William B. Todd, 9 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), IX, pp. 434–82, (p. 434).

1778) Catholic Relief Acts—and the limited scope of Sir Hercules Langrishe's support of the enterprise at that. At the end of 1791, the Irish Catholic Committee had just approached parliament about extending Catholic relief yet further. Langrishe was an acquaintance of Burke's; as a Member of Parliament for Knocktopher, County Kilkenny, he was a Protestant supporter of measured Catholic relief. Later, in 1792, he introduces a further Catholic relief bill; however, he does not support full enfranchisement for Catholics, for fear it would subvert primary Protestant rule.[451] The letter was likely meant for publication; as he later writes to his son Richard in 1792, who was then serving on the Catholic Committee: 'Here, the formless letter I have written to Sir Hercules Langrishe has been of a good deal of service. The Catholic's short apology has been printed by Debret and is much liked'.[452] While the legislative endeavours toward Catholic relief represented the gradual steps that would eventually lead to the uprising of the United Irishmen in 1798, in Burke's time they provided only regulatory measures that maintained Catholic subordination within a Protestant empire. Burke's language in the letter evokes the same preservation of individual religious identity found in his Indian texts. In his *Policy of Making Conquests*, 1779, Burke addressed the benefit of governing the Indian colonials by their traditional laws and practices, observing '[…] all men do not infinitely prefer a subjection to Princes of their own blood, manners, and religion, to any other […]'.[453] Below, from the same letter to Sir Hercules, Burke makes an observation

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[451] Thomas G. Fewer, 'Langrishe, Sir Hercules (1729–1811)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, [April 2nd, 2012].
[452] Edmund Burke, 'The Right Hon. Edmund Burke to Richard Burke, Jun. Esq.' (20 March 1792), in *Correspondence of the Right Honourable Edmund Burke Between the Year 1744 and the period of his decease in 1797*, ed. by Charles William, Earl Fitzwilliam and Lieutenant General Sir Richard Bourke, K.C.B., II, (London: Francis and John Rivington, 1844), p. 440.
[453] Burke, *Policy of Making Conquests*, *Writings*, V, p. 113.

concerning governing a body of Catholics that resonates with his earlier observation about governing a body of Hindus:

> [l]et us admit that the body of the Catholics are prone to sedition (of which, as I have said, I entertain much doubt), is it possible that any fair observer or fair reasoner can think of confining this description to them only? I believe it to be possible for men to be mutinous and seditious who feel no grievance, but I believe no man will assert seriously, that, when people are of a turbulent spirit, the best way to keep them in order is to furnish them with something substantial to complain of.[454]

When Burke writes that no one would argue that the method for keeping a people of a turbulent spirit in order is to give those people something to complain about, he is suggesting that enfranchising colonials would deprive people of grounds upon which to complain. In the quotes above from his letter to Langrishe and his speech about *Making Conquests,* Burke suggests that the way to keep the alleged sedition of colonials at bay is to allow indigenous religious freedom. Therefore, it is prudent to allow for cultural diversity. A multicultural approach, which allows for cultural diversification, is also prudent inasmuch as it widens a government's foundation. Burke elaborates on the idea in the same letter:

> Reduced to a question of discretion, and that discretion exercised solely upon what will appear best for the conservation of the state on its present basis, I should recommend it to your serious thoughts, whether the

[454] Burke, *Letter To Sir Hercules, Writings*, IX, p. 621.

> narrowing of the foundation is always the best way to secure the building?[455]

Religious exclusion only narrows a government's resource, in terms of its supply of loyal subjects. This applies especially in the case of Catholic relief: for example, when the British government needed to widen its resource for the war with America, cultural diversification increased its resource of soldiers. Mahoney observes the increased cultural sensitivity towards Irish Catholics at this time. In short, they were needed to fight alongside the English against the Americans in the Rebellion:

> The anomaly of continuing the harsh repression of the Catholics in their country while at the same time they entertained grievances against Britain struck many Protestants forcibly. […] Moreover, many were well aware that they could hardly hope for the cooperation of their Catholic fellows in a cause which would avail the latter nothing in a country they were scarcely able to call their own.[456]

Mahoney explains that Burke recognized the incongruity of hoping for support from Irish Catholics in the American rebellion when their Catholic fellows did not have true freedom themselves: there was 'a noticeable growth of spirit of toleration even among the members of the Irish parliament'.[457] The Catholics were asked to help fight for a country in which they were virtual helots, so empowering them with their own freedom would have encouraged the patriotism necessary for their participation in the defence against the American colonists. During the American Revolution, this sort of utilitarian reprieve in

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[455] *Ibid.*, p. 630.
[456] Mahoney, p. 69.
[457] *Ibid.*, p. 69.

anti-popery sentiment was not uncommon. To enhance the volume of the rank and file, even George Washington discouraged anti-popery sentiment: allowing more religious sects meant more men who could fight.[458]

In the same letter to Sir Hercules, Burke observes that a body of men who feel aggrieved over a deprivation of power will not simply submit to disenfranchisement. Further, Burke argues that the enfranchisement of people is an ancient, fundamental right:

> The body of disfranchised men will not be perfectly satisfied to remain always in that state. If they are not satisfied, you have two millions of subjects in your bosom full of uneasiness: not that they cannot overturn the Act of Settlement, and put themselves and you under an arbitrary master; or that they are not permitted to spawn a hydra of wild republics, on principles of a pretended natural equality in man; but because you will not suffer them to enjoy the ancient, fundamental, tried advantages of a British Constitution—that you will not permit them to profit of the protection of a common father or the freedom of common citizens […].[459]

Above, Burke admits to the impossibility of overturning the Act of Settlement (1701), which secured the Protestant succession to the English throne; however, he also conveys the unsatisfactory nature of the legislative efforts for Catholic relief up to that point—the relief acts of 1778 and 1782 did not reach far enough.[460] An important feature of the excerpt above is the humanitarian benefits inherent in the British Constitution: protection of a common imperial father, and freedom for common citizens. The 'ancient

[458] O'Brien, p. 93.
[459] Burke, *Letter To Sir Hercules*, *Writings*, IX, p. 630.
[460] O'Flaherty, p. 18.

and fundamental' rights that humanity should enjoy in common, under the theoretical protection of empire, should be sacrosanct. Insofar as this is a Catholic issue, we can understand further that the freedom to exercise established religious practice should also be *sacrosanct*—an idea that is set down in legislation in the American constitution ('Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof […]').[461]

When it comes to Burke's representation of the governance of religion, we can look again to Whelan's analysis: Burke attempts to preserve the separate quality of religious identity, but blends distinction between religious cultures (or renders them familiar) by suggesting their equal cultural importance. Consider his 1782 Letter to Lord Kenmare (21 February). In the letter to Thomas Browne, 4th Viscount Kenmare (1726-95), Burke responds to a point on the 1778 Catholic Relief Bill. Kenmare, a leading Catholic and landowner, had informed Burke that the Catholic clergy would be appointed by parliament. Burke replies:

> Never were the Members of one religious Sect fit to appoint the Pastors to another. Those who have no regard to their welfare, reputation, or internal quiet, will not appoint such as are proper. The Seraglio of Constantinople, is as equitable as we are, whether Catholicks or Protestants; and where their own Sect is concerned full as religious; but the spot which they make of the miserable Dignities of the Greek Church, the little factions of the *Haram* to which they make them subservient, the continual Sale to which they expose and re-expose the same dignity, and by which they squeeze all

[461] *The Constitution of the United States,* Amendment 1, <www.USConstitution.net>, [August 9th, 2012].

> the inferior orders of the Clergy, is, (for I have had particular means of being acquainted with it) nearly equal to all the other oppressions together, exercised by Mussulmen over the unhappy Members of the Oriental church. It is a great deal, to suppose, that even the present Castle would nominate Bishops for the Roman Church of Ireland with a religious regard for its welfare.[462]

Burke attempts to preserve the qualities of different religious sects above, by suggesting no member of one religious sect should be able to appoint leaders to another. However, he also argues that non-Christian sects are just as equitable and just as religious as Christian sects. Thus, he represents relativism between different religious sects, and renders their essential features familiar to one another. Below, Returning to the 1792 letter to Sir Hercules, Burke presents a reverence for differing traditions of established religious sects, yet also presents a familiar feature shared among them—'the common bond of mankind':

> Passing from the extremity of the west, to the extremity almost of the east I have been many years (now entering into the twelfth) employed in supporting the rights, privileges, laws and immunities of a very remote people. I have not as yet been able to finish my task. I have struggled through much discouragement and much opposition; much obloquy; much calumny, for a people with whom I have no tie, but the common bond of mankind. […] I should not know how to show my face, here or in Ireland, if I should say that all the Pagans, all the Mussulmen, and even all the

[462] Burke, *Letter to a Peer*, *Writings*, IX, p. 576.

> Papists (since they must form the highest stage in the climax of evil) are worthy of a liberal and honourable condition, except those of one of the descriptions, which forms the majority of the inhabitants of the country in which you and I were born.[463]

Burke suggests that it would be ludicrous for him to argue for religious respect for all sects, exclusive of only one: Catholicism. His treatment of the religious sects mentioned in the passage(s) above is significant because it blends religious boundaries and definitions. In the passage from the letter to Sir Hercules Langrishe above, Burke also suggests that the only tie uniting him with the people in the east, for whose religious enfranchisement he had been fighting so fervently, is 'the common bond of mankind'. Burke conceptually links differing cultures: Catholics and Hindus (further, Protestants and Muslims) with the 'common bond of humanity'. Burke's language makes a case for understanding his support of Hindu enfranchisement as motivated by his cultural awareness of the common humanity between sects, and not solely his personal connection with Catholic culture. Further, to include not only Muslim sects, but a mention of paganism as well, shows how wide Burke is willing to cast his net in terms of inclusive religious representation.

In a 1775 letter to William Burgh, a member of Irish parliament for Athy, Kildare, Burke argues in favour of a very wide measure of religious toleration, wider even, he argues, than even any dissenter:

> In fact, my opinion in favour of toleration goes far beyond the limits of that act, which was no more than a provision for certain sects of men,

[463] Burke, *Letter To Sir Hercules, Writings*, IX p. 637.

> under certain circumstances, and by no means what is commonly called "an act of toleration". […] I cannot consider our dissenters, of almost any kind, as schismatics; whatever some of their leaders might originally have been in the eye of Him, who alone knows whether they acted under the direction of such a conscience as they had, or at the instigation of pride and passion. There are many things among most of them which I rather dislike than dare to condemn. My ideas of toleration go far beyond even theirs. I would give a full civil protection in which I include an immunity from all disturbance of their publick religious worship, and a power of teaching in schools, as well as Temples, to Jews, Mahometans and even Pagans; especially if they are already possessed of those advantages by long and prescriptive usage; which is as sacred in this exercise of Rights, as in any other.[464]

Burke suggests that his view of religious toleration encompasses a wider range of tolerance than offered by the Act of Toleration (1689), which awarded rights only to certain Protestant nonconformists, but did not extend to Catholics, non-trinitarians, Quakers, and certainly not to non-Christians. According to Burke, his ideas of religious tolerance extend beyond even those belonging to dissenters—he argues that he is much more tolerant than the dissenters who demanded their own civil protection, but would have categorically refused the civil protection of Catholics. Burke purports that he would give full civil protection to Jews, Mahometans, and even Pagans—all sects are equally sacred.

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[464] Burke, *Letter to William Burgh*, in *Correspondence*, II, p. 18.

While the classification of Burke as a Latitudinarian might easily be concluded here (and it is appropriate in many senses), there are complexities inherent in this identity that require exploration as it is fitted to Burke. Isabel Rivers notes popular Latitudinarian terminology, which we could easily recognize in the above excerpts from the Hastings trial: 'right reason, the law of nature, common notions, the light of nature, are the familiar terms of the latitudinarians […]'.[465] Rivers is referring to terminology made popular by Samuel Clarke's, *A Discourse concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation* (1706). Knud Haakonssen describes a category of Protestants who would 'see the Church as, in some sense, of divine origin and the state as a conventional human institution. At least in its general form, this view facilitated a *rapprochement* between many elements of Enlightened dissent and Whig Latitudinarian Anglicanism.'[466] We could safely seat Burke in this category. However, Rivers acknowledges one possibility in the development of freethinking: 'that freethinking genuinely developed from latitudinarianism, and was a logical extension of certain lines of thought pursued within strict limits by the latitudinarians themselves.'[467] She explains that Freethinkers owe a debt to 'the latitudinarians, Locke, and the classical moralists, especially Cicero'.[468] If what Rivers tells us about Latitudinarians is true (about the close intersection between Freethinkers and Latitudinarians), then the label is problematic for Burke. As we know, he was formally an Anglican, and not a Freethinker. F.P. Lock acknowledges a certain

[465] Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment: a study of the language of religion and ethics in England, 1660–1780*, 2 vols, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), I, *Shaftesbury to Hume*, p. 79.
[466] Haakonssen, p. 6.
[467] Rivers, p. 25.
[468] Rivers, p. 19.

Latitudinarian openness to Burke's faith: 'Burke thought dogma, church government, and liturgical practice less important than the belief in fundamentals and the exercise of virtue'.[469] However, if we weigh these scholarly definitions against appropriate usage of the term, circa 1662-1862, ('latitudinarian', meaning 'One who, though not a sceptic, is indifferent as to particular creeds and forms of church government or worship') the Latitudinarian indifference to religious doctrine conveys an opposition toward any religious creed to which doctrine was central.[470] I do not think we see evidence of Burke opposing sects to which doctrine holds high importance (e.g. Catholicism). On the contrary, I think we can evince Burke's openness to a variety of religious creeds (with or without doctrines). Burke's multicultural acceptance of different sects is not simple toleration, which denotes enduring or allowing something unacceptable. There is no reason to question Burke's genuineness when he makes an argument in the Hastings trial (above) for the equal legitimacy of non-Christian sects (relative to their culture)—they are 'as equitable as we are, whether Catholicks or Protestants; and where their own Sect is concerned full as religious'.[471] There is no reason we should disbelieve the declaration of his own mind, when he explains that, for him, his definition of religious toleration extends beyond even the definition of toleration in his day (the Toleration Act referenced in his *Letter to William Burgh* above).[472] Therefore, while it is valid to recognize an official classification of Burke as an Anglican Latitudinarian; we can also recognize the validity of his own declaration that his conceptualization of religion(s) extends beyond

[469] F.P. Lock, 'Burke and Religion', in *An Imaginative Whig: Reassessing the Life and Thought of Edmund Burke*, (Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 2005), ed. by Ian Crowe, pp. 35–58, (p. 35).
[470] Also 1697-1858,'Allowing, favouring, or characterized by latitude in opinion or action, esp. in matters of religion […]', Oxford English Dictionary, 'latitudinarian', <http://www.oed.com/>, [August 3rd, 2012].
[471] Burke, *Letter to a Peer*, *Writings*, IX, p. 576.
[472] Burke, *Letter to William Burgh*, *Correspondence* vol. II, p. 18.

the Anglican toleration of the day. We can even think of the arguments he shapes for the state, or the empire, to extend toleration to different sects as a form of tolerance different from that in his own mind—toleration, for the state, is based in fear and self-interest. For example, in his *Letter to Sir Hercules,* when he explains the benefit of widening the foundation of a building, that is an argument with the interest of the empire in mind.[473] The religious toleration described later in the letter is based in fear; he warns that when men are disenfranchised, they will rebel against their governors: 'If they are not satisfied, you have two millions of subjects in your bosom full of uneasiness'.[474] Part of his argument in *Policy of Making Conquests* to let Hindus govern Hindus is that they will be less likely to rebel.[475] These are proto-Utilitarian arguments for diversity, based in conservative political prudence—not sympathy. In any case, it has been explained that the objective of this thesis is not a biographical enterprise to decipher the most appropriate label for Burke's religious affiliation, but rather, to analyse the critical imprint of his representation of religions. With that in mind, I wish to explore this imprint further in his writings about Ireland.

In 1779, Burke writes to the Scottish Reverend John Erskine, who was an opponent of Catholic emancipation. Below, Burke is again discussing the Catholic question; he attempts to preserve the quality of differing religious traditions (in this case, Christian traditions), while observing the common features of humanity.

> I wish, with you, that we may not be so far Englishmen and Scotchmen, as to forget we are men; or, (I am sorry to be obliged to wish without you,)

[473] *Letter To Sir Hercules*, *Writings*, IX, p. 630.
[474] *Ibid.,* p. 630.
[475] Burke, *Policy of Making Conquests*, *Writings*, V, p. 113

> even so far presbyterians, or episcopalians, or catholics, as to forget we are Christians, which is our common bond of religion while we are distinguished into sects, as the former is when we are divided into states.[476]

Burke and Erskine are bonded under the category of Christianity, and under the wider-still category of humankind. Burke's representation of religion above softens the essential features between Christian sects. Burke reminds Erskine of the familiar feature shared between these sects—that they are men.

Burke's language later escalates to veritable blasphemy in the same letter when he criticises the audacity of encroaching on the sacredness of established non-Christian religions—equally religious (in their culture) as any sect of Christianity. Burke takes issue with the audacity of religious zealots and missionaries that encroach on the indigenous Jewish and Muslim communities of the world. Writing about the world's religions, he confesses:

> I think they are all with a great deal of human imperfections […]. I think so of the whole Christian church; having at the same time, that respect for all the other religions, even such as have mere human reason for their origin, and which men as wise and good as I, profess,—that I could not justify to myself to give to the synagogue, the mosque, or the pagoda, the language which your pulpits so liberally bestow upon a great part of the

[476] Burke, *Letter to Rev. John Erskine*, *Correspondence*, II, p. 269.

> Christian world. […] I do not aspire to the glory of being a zealot for any particular national Church [...].[477]

First, this criticism resonates with his condemnation of religious encroachment in India, which Burke delivered in the launching of the Hastings impeachment.[478] Second, it blurs religious definition by suggesting that all religions are equally sacred (in their own cultures). Burke's avowal that he is no representative for any national Church counters interpretations of Burke as a 'Christian Statesman' (from Cobban above; from Canavan and Frohnen, as discussed in the previous chapter; from Harris, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis). It is my position that the way in which Burke represents religion is far more complex than Christ-centred, Conservatism. He is an Anglican Latitudinarian; yet, the extent of his open-mindedness toward different religious sects (as he explains above) extends beyond measures of mere toleration in his time. He is conservative in his wish to preserve the traditional establishments of the empire, but progressive in his understanding that the empire must widen and diversify its cultural foundation in order to preserve the traditions of the empire for posterity. The complex condition of religious cultures that appear in Burke's works—rendering exotic non-Anglican communities familiar to Anglican ones—stands on the threshold of what twentieth-century theorists of modernity postulate. For example, D.J.B. Trim and Richard Bonney encapsulate the paradoxical condition of the way in which religious cultures divide and assimilate in their evolution through modernity: 'The problems of the clash of uniformity with diversity, of the relationships between majority and minority, and of the contrasting pull of hierarchy and anarchy, are especially evident in the area of

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[477] Burke, *Letter to Rev. John Erskine*, *Correspondence*, II, pp. 270–71.
[478] *Ibid.*, p. 305.

religion.'[479] A pull between cultural diversity and uniformity is evident in the way Burke represents global religions in his writings discussed in this chapter. The texts above show religious enfranchisement of non-Anglican cultures pulling against the sovereignty of the established Anglican Church. There are additional analyses, from other theorists of modernity, that elaborate on the struggle apparent between the preservation of cultural identity and the rendering of cultural unity. We will now look at these analyses with the objective of further articulating Burke's representation of religion. Further, we will look at his engagement in other imperial affairs that span the globe, and what Burke scholars put forward as Burke's representation of imperial duty to indigenous culture.

Burke, modern paradox

The way in which Burke's representation of global religions softens difference between sects forces the conceptual formation of cultural communities—Zygmunt Bauman describes such cultural unity as 'a unity which is an outcome, not an *a priori* given condition, of shared life, a unity put together through negotiation and reconciliation, not the denial [or exclusion of], stifling or smothering out of differences'.[480] As we have seen above, Burke diminishes dogmatic and cultural difference by rendering their features familiar. Bauman also explains that once identities have been altered by the smothering out of difference, cultural roots are disembedded from their foundation:

> Once the beliefs, values and styles have all been privatized—decontextualized or disembedded, […] identities cannot but look fragile,

[479] Trimm, p. 21.
[480] Bauman, p. 178.

> […] and devoid of all defences except the skills and determination of the agents to hold them tight and protect them from erosion.[481]

Therein lies the cultural struggle, the modern paradox, evident in Burke's writing about religion: he attempts to protect the individual quality of established religious practice from erosion; yet, he erodes religious difference into familiarity by doing so. Burke's idea of empire might have been, as Langford writes, one of 'communities bound in partnership', but his own erosion of definition, in his representation of religious identities, renders religious communities familiar to one another.[482]

Burke's representation of global religions suggests that Muslim, Hindu, and Christian sects are all united under the community of humanity, 'all born into subjection, all born equally, high and low'.[483] Just as Burke suggests that the shared law of providence cuts across geographical and cultural boundaries, Marshall Berman writes:

> Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology; in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, "all that is solid melts into air"[484]

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[481] *Ibid.*, p. 178.
[482] Langford, 'Burke', ODNB, *ibid*.
[483] Burke, *The Launching of the Hastings Impeachment*, 'Opening of Impeachment', *Writings*, VI, p. 350.
[484] Marshall Berman, p. 15.

Berman uses Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels' *Communist Manifesto* (1848) to interpret modernity: Marx and Engels claim that the foundations of our societies are false, and contradictory:

> All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real condition of life and his relations with his kind.[485]

The habitual subversion of individual cultural identity, by the cultural familiarity evident in Burke's thinking about religion, makes his writings concerning Ireland and India exemplary of this modern condition described by Marx, Engles, and Berman: the erosive nature of the modern condition will not allow the embedment of religious roots to endure. To view Burke as a progenitor of modernity in this way is ironic when considering what Marx actually thought of Burke. In *Das Kapital* (1867), he offers the following opinion of Burke:

> The sycophant—who in the pay of the English oligarchy played the romantic *laudator temporis acti* [praiser of time past] against the French Revolution just as, in the pay of the North American colonies at the beginning of the American troubles, he had played the liberal against the English oligarchy—was an out-and-out vulgar bourgeois.[486]

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[485] Marx and Engels, *Manifesto*, p. 8.
[486] Karl Marx, *Das Kapital* (1867), vol. I, Ch. 31, Genesis of the Industrial Capitalist, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867, (March 9, 2012).

Marx evaluates Burke's thought as capriciousness, motivated by materialistic gain. On a point of accuracy (or maybe absurdity), Burke was bribed neither by the English parliament, nor any of the North American colonies; no doubt, Marx refers to Burke's employment during the time of the American crisis as an agent for the Assembly of New York, as well as his seat in the English parliament during the time of the French Revolution. In any case, Marx's assessment of Burke's position(s) in political matters as mercenary misses the commonality between the French and American revolutions, which was, indeed, the criticism of oligarchy. Further, Burke's advocacy for enfranchising the people of India and Ireland rather resonates with Marx's value placed on the proletariat.[487] Perhaps the only sliver of accuracy in Marx's evaluation is his placement of Burke within the context of modernity: 'Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social relations, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier times.'[488] Burke is the modern paradox manifested: he engages with the constant renovation of religious conceptualization.

Berman describes the paradoxical nature of modernity as 'a world where everything is pregnant with its contrary'.[489] In his *Tracts relating to Popery Laws*, Burke expresses such a paradox—one in which the British government has worsened the condition of the Catholic people in Ireland by improving it. Before this, however, Burke first points out the irony that Catholicism was once the established religion of the state; the current religion of the state would have been dissent:

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[487] For a more detailed thoughts on contrasting Burke and Marx, see Jeremy Waldron's introduction to *'Nonsense upon Stilts': Bentham, Burke and Marx on the Rights of Man*, ed. by Jeremy Waldron, (Methuen: London, 1987), pp. 1–6.
[488] Marx and Engels, *Manifesto*, p. 8.
[489] Marshall Berman, p. 22.

> It is proper to recollect, that this Religion [Catholicism] which is so persecuted in its Members, is an old Religion of the Country, and the once Established Religion of the State; the very same which had for centuries received the countenance and sanction of the Laws, and from which it would at one time have been highly penal to have dissented.[490]

Burke later continues to explain a different irony: that the improvement intended by the Protestant Reformation is pregnant with its contrary:

> And was there no civil society at all in these kingdoms before the Reformation? To say it was not as well constituted as it ought to be, is saying nothing at all to the purpose; for that assertion evidently regards improvement, not existence. It certainly did then exist; and it as certainly then was at least as much to the advantage of a very great part of society, as what we have brought in the place of it; which is indeed a great blessing to those who have profited of the change; but to all the rest, as we have wrought, that very reverse. We found the people hereticks and idolaters; we have, by way of improving their condition, rendered them slaves and beggars; they remain in all the misfortune of their old errors, and all the superadded misery of their recent punishment. They were happy enough, in their opinion at least, before the change: what benefits society then had, they partook of them all. They are now excluded from those benefits: and so far as civil society comprehends them, as we have managed the matter, our persecutions are so far from being necessary to its existence, that out

[490] Burke, *Tracts*, *Writings*, IX, p. 465.

> very Reformation is made in a degree noxious. If this be improvement, truly I know not what can be called a deprivation of society.[491]

A reformation that was meant to improve the condition of a people, but in fact harmed them by reducing them to helots, is ironic. Social 'improvements' that are, in actuality, 'deprivations' (e.g., the Penal Laws) are prime examples of 'things being pregnant with their opposites', and therefore, exemplary of modern paradox.

We now understand that Burke not only injected awareness of non-Western culture into British political practice, but also injected awareness of non-Western religious culture into the British conceptualization of religions. Those scholars who have recognized Burke's representation of imperial duty to indigenous culture identify him as a liberal, or Universalist, or pluralist.[492] However, I believe that such labels may underestimate the prudence and interest in empire motivating Burke's position in international affairs. After all, there is a strong undercurrent of political prudence beneath Burke's wide net of tolerance. While Burke criticised the imperialistic actions of the Company in India, his objective was to retain the province for the empire. Paul Langford explains:

> This is not to say that Burke seriously considered the possibility of restoring Indian rule. He had too strong a sense of the forces released by Western expansion to suppose that any power could turn the clock back. Nor was he naïve enough to suppose that the East India Company was the only engine of change.[493]

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[491] *Ibid.*, p. 468.
[492] Burke's liberalism: Mehta, p. 170; Bullard, p. 109; Gibbons, p. 4, p. 12.
[493] Langford, 'Burke', ODNB, *ibid.*

Conceivably, the cost of enfranchising a governed people is less than the loss of a province altogether. Another example of the political prudence of preserving indigenous methods of religious governance is seen in Burke's approach to the Quebec Act of 1774. Burke's treatment of the Quebec Act is particularly relevant to his Irish texts, as it addresses the question of Catholicism.

In 1763 there was a proclamation issued by King George III that added new North American provinces to the British Empire. While the measure never had parliamentary approval, these provinces included East Florida, West Florida, Grenada, and Quebec. Complications over boundary division and methods of governance delayed the measure where Quebec was concerned, in particular. The Privy Council was advising William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, on the need for further information about the colonists—Burke was among the members who '[…] complained that it was impossible to form opinions about the Bill without further information'.[494] The 1774 Quebec Act finally sanctioned the Catholic Church in the French-speaking province of Canada, inasmuch as it recognized the establishment of a Catholic clergy in Quebec that was not subject to the penal restrictions forced on the Catholics in Britain and Ireland; rather, the act extended the benefits of legal security offered by the English constitution. Burke supported the establishment of a Catholic clergy in Quebec, but worried about withdrawing the offer of providing an English assembly in the province, inasmuch as this would surrender too much legislative authority to the King.

[494] Bernard Donoughue, *British Politics and the American Revolution: the path to war, 1773–75,* (London: MacMillan, 1965), p. 123. ; also R. C. Simmons and D. G. Thomas, eds., *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America*, 1754–83, 7 vols to date (New York: Milward, 1982–).

Critics such as O'Brien and O'Flaherty have interpreted Burke's approach to the bill as evidence of his 'avoidance' of the Catholic question, because of Burke's position on the Quebec act focusing on the retention of judicial and government institutions.[495] However, there is a clear acknowledgment that the Canadian grievance is grounded in political and religious freedom; the parliamentary report of Burke's speech on 10 June 1774 states Burke's argument:

> But the reason the Noblesse did not like the English laws was on account of the manner in which they had been represented to them: namely, that they were a string of religious and civil persecutions, which would entirely hinder them either from exercising their own religion, or from having any share in the government of their own country […].[496]

Responding to Lord North in the Debate on the Clause Allowing the Exercise of the Romish Religion, Burke delivers an outcry for Catholic toleration, at the expense of losing Quebec as part of the empire:

> But before I proceed, allow me to state, in a few words, my opinion with regard to the principle of toleration, There is but one healing, Catholic principle of toleration which ought to find favour in this House. It is wanted, not only in our colonies, but here. The thirsty earth of our own country is gasping and gaping, and crying out for that healing shower from heaven. The noble lord [Lord North] has told you of the right of those people by the treaty; but I consider the right of conquest so little, and the

[495] O'Brien, p. 161; O'Flaherty, p. 15.
[496] *The Debates and Proceedings of the British House of Commons from 1743 to 1774*, 2 vols, (London: J. Almon, 1766–75), XI, pp. 351–54; see also Langford *Writings*, II, p. 473.

> right of human nature so much, that the former has very little consideration with me. I look upon the people of Canada as coming, by the dispensation of God, under the British government. I would have us govern it, in the same manner as the all-wise disposition of Providence would govern it.[497]

Perhaps, instead of exemplifying Burke's avoidance of the Catholic issue, the passage above demonstrates Burke's willingness to engage tactfully with an issue in which Catholicism is undeniably elemental while prioritizing imperial tenancy in the Canadian province. Further, the passage above demonstrates Burke's readiness to stand for the established religious enfranchisement of colonial people.[498] Burke's approach to the Quebec Act is an example of a religious argument grounded with terms of political prudence. Richard Bourke acknowledges an underpinning of prudence in Burke's approach to the Quebec Bill:

> Burke's contributions to the debates over Quebec were […] consistent with a general ambition to reduce the hazards of political oppression, as he at least understood this. […] Ascendancy would then be interpreted as severe subjection, pitting the few against the many and sowing the seeds of dissension. Faction would then resuscitate the spirit of conquest and elude every attempt at pacification.[499]

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[497] *Debates of the House of Commons in the Year 1774, on the Bill for making more effectual Provision for the Government of the Province of Quebec, Drawn up from the Notes of the Right Honourable Sir Henry Cavendish*, (London: John Wright, 1839), p. 222.
[498] O'Brien, p. 178.
[499] Richard Bourke, 'Burke and the Politics of Conquest', *Modern Intellectual History* , 4 (2007), 403–32 (p. 32).

Inflaming the sense of political oppression within a conquered people by depriving them of religious protection encourages the splintering of religious factions; allowing a conquered populace to retain their methods of religious governance is prudent, inasmuch as it pacifies them. A similar measure passed in Ireland that same year. The Irish Oath encouraged Catholics to swear allegiance to King George III without renouncing spiritual allegiance to the pope. Both the Quebec Act and the Irish Oath of 1774 demonstrate a measure of religious tolerance toward Catholics for the sake of political prudence. In religious terms, we can construe Burke's understanding that the cost of expanding tolerance to non-Protestant (or even non-Christian) sects is less than losing an element of the empire. As Gibbons observes above, Burke does not wish to ignore the cost of progress; but I would like to indicate that despite some cost, Burke still welcomes progress (enfranchising Catholics, legitimizing Christian alongside non-Christian sects relative to indigenous culture): this is conceptual expansion. This is religious progressiveness.

Burke's response to the American crisis is (conceivably) a non-religious example of this sort of weighing of cost: driving the American colonists to rebellion is far more costly than what Eagleton calls the 'more sagacious course of conciliation'.[500] Mahoney writes that 'Burke wore his unpopular views on the American revolution like a badge of honour […]'.[501] In his *Speech on Conciliation with America* (22 March 1775), Burke pleaded, 'The proposition is Peace […] simple peace'.[502] However, prudence motivated his support for conciliation. He was encouraging England's leniency in arguing for the

[500] Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 38.
[501] Mahoney, p. 155.
[502] Burke, *Conciliation*, in *Writings*, III, p. 108.

repeal of the Stamp Act, but all with the objective of keeping the American colonies through the Declaratory Act (1766)—augmented by the Tea Act and the Boston Tea Party of 1773, which attempted to re-assert England's sovereignty over the colonies. The following excerpt from Burke's *Speech on American Taxation (April 1774)* clearly defines Burke's motivation grounded in prudence, not colonial sympathy:

> I am not here going into the distinction of rights, not attempting to mark their boundaries. I do not enter into these metaphysical distinctions; I hate the very sound of them.[503]

Burke makes it clear that these were not cultural sympathies about the 'distinction of rights' or 'boundaries' of an oppressed and suffering people; he removes his agenda entirely from the realm of the 'metaphysical.' His *Speech on American Taxation (April 1774)* further clarifies that his interest is for the political and economic welfare of England.

> There is no fair dealing in any part of the transaction. If you mean to follow your true motive and your public faith, give up your tax on tea for raising a revenue […] which produces you no advantage; no, not a penny.[504]

Burke's support of the repeal of the tax on tea was not wholly motivated by cultural sympathy, but rather the possibility of revenue. Burke argues that the tax on tea is far less lucrative than the possibility of open commerce with the colonies. The cost of losing the American colonies as part of the empire, and losing trade with America, is greater than

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[503] Edmund Burke, *Speech on American Taxation (April 1774)*, in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. by Paul Langford, 9 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), II, p. 458.
[504] Burke, *Taxation*, p. 425.

making concessions. While, of course, it would have been unwise for Burke to take an absolute stance supporting American Independence, and thereby supporting England's defeat in the American Rebellion, he was still critical of Britain's method of robbing one part of the empire to fund another: 'It is through the American trade of Tea that your East India conquests are to be prevented from crushing you with their burthen.'[505] Eagleton writes that Burke's notion of hegemony 'comes down to the banal maxim: Keep them happy!' which is a rather unsympathetic maxim.[506] It is not simply Burke's calculated prudent preservation of empire that makes the liberal label for Burke seem restrictive.

Other critical interpretations approaching Burke's writings to ask historical and political questions have attempted to capture Burke's anti-exclusionary politics. Jennifer G. Pitts writes about Burke's pluralistic and 'universalist commitments', as being part of a liberal tradition, along with Bentham and J. S. Mill.[507] However, I would argue that placing Burke into a category such as 'universalist' or 'liberal' oversimplifies Burke's thinking, and (if we are examining Burke's thinking through the lens of religion in modernity), it oversimplifies the state of religious conceptualization in modernity—in general. Where Burke's liberalism is perceived, some scholars have tried to enrol Burke into liberal-individualist thinking, such as C.B. Macpherson and Isaac Kramnick.[508] In addition to liberalism's focus on individualism (a nineteenth-century concept), J.W. Burrow's analysis of Whig versus Liberal helps to understand how inflating Burke's liberalism is not exactly appropriate: Burrow explains that some methods of

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[505] *Ibid.*, p. 416.
[506] Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 53.
[507] Pitts, pp. 60.
[508] C.B. Macpherson, *Burke*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981); Isaac Kramnick, *The Rage of Edmund Burke* (New York: Basic Books, 1977).

understanding political philosophy interchange '"Whig" in favour of a prospective use of "liberal"'.[509] Burrows further explains the nineteenth-century re-appropriation of eighteenth-century terms, like Whig: 'Liberalism […] is readily presented as the philosophical counterpart to *laissez-faire* Political Economy. It makes the central political issue of liberal thought, and hence by extension of nineteenth-century England, that of state intervention in economic life […].'[510] In political theory, Burke often is associated with *laissez-faire* politics; therefore, the nineteenth-century division that Burrows outlines therefore explains liberal interpretations of Burke.[511] However, Burrows further indicates that this polarization underestimates the closeness (and, at times, interchanging) between Whig and Liberal, because working with (not against) the grain of society (i.e. *laissez-faire* politics), would have been viewed as a 'Burkean and nineteenth-century Whig concept'.[512]

The nineteenth-century recognition of Burke's liberal leanings was ushered in by Leslie Stephen, who saw Burke's conceptualization of the nation as a living organism as prefiguring nineteenth-century concepts of individualist social evolution.[513] However, figures such as Stephen made Burke acceptable to nineteenth-century Liberals by focusing on his 'Christian earnestness'.[514] Ultimately, Burrows makes a case for a conservative-reactionary Burke when he discusses Burke's response to the French Revolution: 'It [Burke's response] is emphatically not a modern or progressive Whig

[509] 'liberalism', OED *ibid*.; Burrow, p. 2.
[510] Burrow, p. 3.
[511] Herbert McClosky, 'Conservatism and Personality', *The American Political Science Review*, 52 (1958), 27–45, and also Samuel Bowels and Herbert Gintis, 'Social Capital and Community Governance', *The Economic Journal*, 112 (2002), 419–36, include Burke in a tradition of *laissez-faire* political thinking.
[512] Burrow, p. 35.
[513] Leslie Stephen, *English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (1876), 2 vols., (London, 1962), II, pp. 195, 193.
[514] Burrow, p. 14.

diagnosis […]'.[515] I argue that Burke's open-mindedness to non-Christian sects counters interpretations of Burke as 'emphatically not' progressive or modern. While I can understand Stephen's claim about Burke pre-figuring nineteenth century concepts, I do not believe Stephen's method of enrolling Burke into liberalism is appropriate either. He sources Burke's liberalism in Christ-centred earnestness; as I have shown above, Burke's conceptualization of religion is open to non-Christian sects.

In terms of universalism, Gibbons also writes that Burke 'possesses the global reach of universalist theories', yet also marks Burke's rejection of metaphysical abstraction, ('or the insensitivity to time and place, that characterized progress and universal reason') as Burke's 'rejection of universalism' and his 'departure from conventional Enlightenment'.[516] Gibbons refers to universalism as 'the parochial emphasis on "sameness"'; in short, Gibbons argues that while Burke possessed the concept of universalism, he rejected its characteristics that marked progress.[517] I would counter Gibbons' argument by pointing to the elements of abstraction (or methods of rendering familiar) in Burke's representation of religion, evidenced in the texts above; I argue that religious inclusiveness, in fact, does characterize progress. However, if universalism is committed to 'concern for others without regard to national or other allegiances', and universal tolerance (i.e. 'the tolerance of violence'), then the classification does not quite encompass the complications in Burke's treatment of other

[515] Burrow, p. 37.
[516] Gibbons, p. 13, 116, 177.
[517] *Ibid.*, p. 116.

cultures—which, as has been discussed, is an attempt to retain the individual quality of religious identities.[518]

Welsh and Fidler explain that for scholars of international studies Burke's liberal leanings have more appeal than his conserve leanings because liberalism has 'universal potential', for a 'cosmopolitan culture'—meaning, 'familiar with and at ease with various countries'.[519] Simms criticises the pitfall of exaggerating Burke's liberalism, arguing that a view of Burke as Universalist or liberal is '[…] in thrall to the Westphalian myth, and thus tend to exaggerate the novelty of Burke's interventionism'.[520] By interventionism (and the 'Westphalian myth'), he refers to the concept of a sovereign nation-state founded upon principles of exclusion through territoriality and non-involvement from external agents in domestic affairs.[521] Welsh and Fidler also address Burke where pluralism is concerned; they write of the scholars in international policy who seek more in the way of pluralism and political solidarity from Burke that his 'perspective seems to offer little help': 'If cultural heterogeneity continues to throw international society back toward pluralism, then the moral contribution of the society of states to both international order and justices may be undermined' (The heterogeneity inherent in pluralism will inevitably undermine order).[522] If we think about how Burke's representation of global religions fits into this argument about international politics, (to use the phrasing of Welsh and Fidler) we can conceive of how the heterogeneous quality of religious identity is undermined by a rendering of differing cultures as familiar, which we can conceive as conceptual

[518] Pitts, p. 60; 'universalism', OED, *ibid.*.
[519] Welsh and Fidler, p. 60; Oxford English Dictionary, 'cosmopolitan', [April 29th, 2013].
[520] Simms, p. 101.
[521] Carlson and Owens also look at the Westphalian myth (as a solution to the 30 Years' War), p. 15.
[522] Welsh and Fidler, p. 65.

homogenizing, to some extent. Gibbons argues, 'Genuine pluralism or diversity, for Burke, transcends the search for sameness, which prevails in abstract cosmopolitanism, and is willing to encounter the shock of the strange, without the safety-nets of familiarity or civic uniformity.'[523] Gibbons is correct in explaining that Burke finds 'the strange' in all religious sects, in terms of acknowledging their individual quality. However, I also believe that Burke does endeavour to find a sameness, in terms of drawing familiarity between features in common. For example, he admits that all sects are faulty in his letter to Erskine; Burke does find sameness in the shared frailty of the human construction of religious sects. Again, upon examining Burke's thought through a political lens, labels such as pluralism, universalism, liberalism all possess an arguable validity; however, the objective of my analysis is to examine the complexity of those labels when it comes to examining Burke's thought through a religious lens.

The shared endeavour between the scholars above is to capture the way Burke expands political practice to be inclusive of humanity. Other critics have acknowledged Burke's innovativeness in injecting an awareness of humanity into imperial practice: Simms writes that while the Whig interventionist doctrine was not necessarily new, Burke carried the concept of intervention further '[…] now Burke had brought the much broader category of "humanity" into play'.[524] Eagleton names Burke as a figurehead of 'nationalist humanism': a nationalism wherein man's patriotism is defined by his relationship to other men, not the state.[525] I would expand these observations to argue that

[523] Gibbons, p. 178.
[524] Simms, p. 101.
[525] Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 232–33; Welsh and Fidler contextualize their study on Burke ad international politics in contemporary human rights issues: Welsh and Fidler, p. 61.

Burke's injection of humanity into international politics is innovative in its contribution to expanding the eighteenth-century representation of global religions.

D.J.B. Trim and Richard Bonney describe a mobility of cultures in modernization and globalization: 'The enhanced mobility of persons and of ideas has transformed homogenous societies into heterogeneous ones, so the relationships between individual groups and larger wholes have assumed practical importance and become the subject of greater critical debate.'[526] The forced cultural diversification characteristic of the modernity described by Trim and Bonney is seen in Burke's representation of global cultures as distinct, yet familiar. Burke promotes the importance of indigenous culture (established institutions and traditions). While this promotion is carried out with the health of the empire (prudently) in mind, the anthropological consideration for culture is modern.

Conclusion to Chapter 2

Talal Asad briefly mentions Burke's legacy in modernity, as a concept or theory: 'Although Burke does not say this, we can see that this submission to the experience of horror-and-delight opens the way to a modern understanding of "the sacred" as well as to an aesthetics of excess.'[527] Asad's assigns importance to two of Burke's contributions to modern understanding. The latter understanding, of aesthetics, resonates in the aesthetic-political studies (e.g., from Eagleton, Gibbons, White, Bourke). I believe that my critical interpretation resonates with the former: I have argued Burke's contribution to the modern understanding of 'the sacred' by demonstrating how he erodes religious boundaries into a unifying category of familiar tradition, relative to indigenous culture.

[526] *Ibid.,* p. 21.
[527] Asad, p. 122.

Looking at Burke in this way not only depicts him as a progenitor of modernity, but a progenitor of a particularly multicultural modernity. Gordon Rupp describes Burke as '[…] one of the profoundest Christian thinkers of his age […]'.[528] On the contrary, I would argue that my analysis above reveals Burke as much more than a Christ-centred thinker. Rather, I believe we are beginning to see Burke as a multicultural thinker, whose representation of global cultures transcends boundaries of religious sect and nation.

Burke's criticism of tyrannous encroachment did not end with his engagement with India. The next chapter will explore how, to Burke, the English youth of the East Indian Trading Company ran parallel to the French youth recruited by rebellious Jacobites in France in terms of hastily obtained power—both groups being corrupted by the spoils of tyranny. Indianism, however, differs from Jacobinism in its gradual cultural encroachment, as opposed to Jacobinism's epochal cultural upheaval. Sunil Agnani observes the necessity of observing these forms of malignity and tyranny, relative to different cultures:

> […] what Burke feared is something overlooked by many who read his work on Europe or India in isolation: the coevality of the transformations taking place in many parts of the colonial world and metropolitan Europe that he captured in the couplet Indianism / Jacobinism.[529]

It is clear from the discussion over Burke's Indian and Irish texts above that there is a coevality of religious tyranny in India and Ireland. Agnani suggests that studying any of these texts in isolation would neglect this coevality of political tyranny between India and

[528] Gordon Rupp, *Religion in England 1688–1791*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), p. 540.
[529] Sunil Agnani, 'Jacobinism in India, Indianism in English Parliament: Fearing the Enlightenment and Colonial Modernity with Edmund Burke', *Cultural Critique*, 68 (2008), 131 -162, (p. 132).

France. In the next chapter, I engage with Burke's perception of tyranny in France, but not in an argument that places him in opposition to modernity. If modernity describes 'a world where everything is pregnant with its contrary', then religion is subverted by contrary themes (e.g., secularism, atheism, even demonic themes.)[530] My next chapter is an examination of the irony of the way in which Burke's rhetoric (in a way) complies with these themes.

[530] Marshall Berman, p. 22.

Ch. 3: 'Profaning of the Sacred: Burke's confrontation with the French Revolution, *The Reflections*'

Introduction to Chapter 3

The chronology of Burke's writings now brings us to his response to the uprising in France. This chapter is focused on Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), secondarily leaning on his *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* (1791) and *Thoughts on French Affairs* (1791).[531] There is a wealth of scholarship in which authors examine Burke's political thinking, as it figures historically with the political rivalries surrounding the French Revolution. However, I believe that scholarly interpretations of Burke's response to the French Revolution are lacking in attention to his religious thought and its impression against a background of modernity. My reading of the above texts is an effort to remedy this inattention. Chiefly, my interpretation of the above texts is an engagement with the idea that, when Burke comes to consider religious sacredness in the context of the events in France (and how they appear to the Reverend Price, the Revolutionary Society, and the National Assembly), he seems to acknowledge that the sacred (inevitably) contains its opposite—the demonic, the sacrilegious.

I believe that the way in which Burke defends religious sacredness in the above texts reveals a provocative dimension to his representation of religion in his writings. Through a rhetorical method we shall refer to as 'libel by irony', he habitually

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[531] Edmund Buke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France, and on the proceedings in certain societies in London relative to that event. In a letter intended to have been sent to a gentleman in Paris*. By the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, London, M.DCC.XC. [1790], Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale, [August 3rd, 2012]; and also in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: The French Revolution, 1790-1794*, ed. by Paul Langford, and L.G. Mitchell, 9 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), VIII, pp. 52–294.

generalizes all dissenting heterodoxy as demonic. L.G. Mitchell observes this rhetorical tactic:

> […] Burke began to construct a diabolid of ghosts and phantoms that menaced the English Constitution. Religious dissent of all kinds acquired a demonic character. Those arguing for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts were treated as political subversives. The fact that Fox, Sheridan, and other leading Whigs continued to support the principle of religious toleration therefore distanced them from Burke. Also menacing were those clubs and societies which existed to promote religious and political change.[532]

Above, Mitchell describes an aspect of Burke's rhetoric: constructing a 'diabolid'. From this description, readers conceive of Burke intentionally manufacturing a body 'of or pertaining to the devil'.[533] Mitchell's observation begs expansion. This is the first task of this chapter: I will first look at the *Reflections* to highlight the ways in which Burke exalts demonic themes, and renders away differentiating characteristics between sects of Christian heterodoxy. My objective is to highlight the centrality of the demonic in the text. For this reason, I focus only on the early part of the text, as opposed to offering a reading of the entire *Reflections*. I submit that Burke's construction of this diabolid is more than a rhetorical tactic to convey his political thought; evil and irreligious themes have an overbearing presence in Burke's *Reflections* alongside themes of holiness and sacredness. For this reason (along with others), the second task in this chapter will be to

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[532] Burke, *Reflections*, *Writings*, VIII, p. 8.
[533] Oxford English Dictionary, 'diabolic', <http://www.oed.com/>, [April 10th, 2011].

argue against J.C.D. Clark's interpretation of the *Reflections*, which discourages reading the religious context of the text. Clark suggests that while Burke mentions religion, his criticism of the upheaval in France is not a criticism of sacrilege:

> Even Burke's comments on the desperate plight of the French church in the Revolution were not those of a co-religionist, his defence of its hierarchy in the *Reflections* was pragmatic; he said almost nothing about the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, a reorganization imposed by the new government […]; his outrage at the seizure of the goods of the French church was outrage at theft, not sacrilege.[534]

I do not agree with Clark that Burke's outrage was solely at 'theft'; in fact, Burke does express outrage over the oppression and exploitation of the clergy. I argue against Clark on this point: Burke's indignation against the revolution in France *is* outrage at sacrilege; I believe the outrage Burke expresses over the encroachment upon religious sacredness is central to Burke's commentary in the *Reflections*, his *Letter to a Member*, and his *Thoughts on French Affairs*.[535] However, I believe his defence of religious sacredness reveals that provocative dimension of Burke's representation of religion—one in which 'holiness' shares equal importance with the 'profane'.[536] The third task in this chapter is to unearth the themes of darkness and evil on which Burke's defence against sacrilege depends. I will suggest that Burke's *Reflections* and his, *Letter to a Member* and his

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[534] Clark, Introduction to *Reflections*, p. 26.
[535] 'The crime or sin of stealing of misappropriating what is consecrated to God's service. In the ecclesiastical use, extended to include any kind of outrage on consecrated persons or things, and the violation of any obligation having a sacramental character, or recognized as under the special protection of the Church.' Oxford English Dictionary, 'sacrilege', <http://www.oed.com/>, [August 3rd, 2012].
[536] 'Dedicated or consecrated to God or a religious purpose; sacred', Oxford English Dictionary, 'holy', <http://www.oed.com/>, [August 3rd, 2012]. 'Not relating or devoted to what is sacred or biblical', unconsecrated, secular, lay, civil, as distinguished from ecclesiastical […] Freq. contrasted with sacred', Oxford English Dictionary, 'profane', <http://www.oed.com/>, [August 3rd, 2012].

Thoughts on French Affairs give a voice to the very evil he is admonishing, which seats these texts in eighteenth-century characteristics of rhetoric—as we will learn from John Barrell and S.J. Barnett. Then, I attempt to counterbalance interpretations of Burke's *Reflections* as reactionary. Many scholars interpret the *Reflections* as evincing Burke's reactionary-Conservatism, in the sense of 'one who is against radical political or social reform, and in favour of a reversion to a former state of affairs'. [537] J.W. Burrow writes, 'Burke's *Reflections* is emphatically not a modern or progressive Whig diagnosis'. [538] Russell Kirk, Eagleton, White, Frohnen, Gibbons all position Burke against progress when looking at the *Reflections*. [539] I evince Burke's value of change, which is antithetical to a reactionary identity, through the lens of his representation of religion.

Finally, I demonstrate how this profane dimension in Burke's representation of religion is aptly articulated in twentieth century theories of modernity. Burke's engagement with dark, demonic themes in the defence of the sacred reveals a paradox akin to the modern 'profaning of the sacred' coined by Karl Marx and applied to modernity by Marshall Berman.[540] I argue against interpretations (such as Burrow's) that suggest Burke's *Reflections* is anti-modern by demonstrating that Burke's representation of religion in the text (along with his *Letter to a Member* and his *Thoughts on French*

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[537] Oxford English Dictionary, 'reactionary', <http://www.oed.com/>, [August 3rd, 2012]; some reactionary interpretations of he *Reflections* include; Ian Hampshire-Monk's 'Edmund Burke's Changing Definition for Intervention', in *The Historical Journal*, 48, (2005), 65–100, (p. 65), which sees Reflections solely as a Conservative defence of the *ancien regime*; and also Bruce Mazlish, 'The Conservative Revolution of Edmund Burke', *The Review of Politics*, 20, (1958), 21–33.
[538] Burrow, p. 37.
[539] Russel Kirk's interpretation on *Reflections* as a decidedly reactionary text in his and Roger Scruton's *Edmund Burke: A Genius Reconsidered* (Syracuse, N.J.: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2009), other similar interpretations: Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'Ireland, Circumstances, Anti-communism', *in Edmund Burke: Appraisals and Applications*, ed. by Daniel Ritchie, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1990), pp. 161–83, (p. 178); Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 42; White, p. 83; Canavan, p. 163; Frohnen, p. 9; Gibbons, p. 10.
[540] Marx and Engels, *Manifesto*, p. 8. Marshall Berman, p. 89.

Affairs) deconstructs concepts that define religion in a way that resonates with modern deconstructionist conceptualizations of religion, as trans-religious, or religion without religion (as we shall see from Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault).[541]

Clark suggests that while Burke defended the established French Church (which was the Catholic Church), he did not subscribe to it in his personal beliefs. If we were intending to understand more about Burke's personal religious convictions, then I agree with Clark—his comments surrounding the French church do not prove that Burke was both an Anglican and a Catholic. He was not a co-religionist in this sense. If, however, we are intending to understand Burke's '*comments* on the desperate plight of the French church' (not whether he personally subscribed to it), then I argue that we can think of Burke's comments as co-religionist—in the sense of advocating the freedom for differing religions to co-exist. Indeed, he attacks the National Assembly and the Revolutionary Society for their intolerance toward religious co-existence (in the case of the former, the intolerance toward the Catholic Church). In fact, I will argue further: Burke's commentary surrounding the French Revolution is not only that of a co-religionist, but (more appropriately) that of a trans-religionist, or non-religionist (ideas, as we shall see, that appear in twentieth-century deconstructionist theories).

My critical interpretation of Burke's writings on France differs from others, inasmuch as I treat him in a religious context—beyond his own religious identity. Many scholars argue the importance of understanding Burke's political thinking surrounding the French Revolution: Richard Bourke examines Burke's role in opposing political theories at the heart of the French Revolution: 'A crucial matter in contention among

[541] As cited above: Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell*; Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*; Michel Foucault, *Religion and Culture*.

competing political sects was the connection between enlightenment and politics itself.'[542] James Conniff observes the way in which Burke's 'Irish politics interwove in curious ways with those of his reflections on France' and its politics.[543] Conniff writes, 'Just as he feared the extension of French Jacobin ideas to England, Burke also feared their spread to Ireland […]'.[544]

The scholarship that does provide a measure of religious context for Burke's thinking is limited; further, such scholarship does not generally focus on his responses to the turmoil in France, but rather speculates largely about Burke's Irish-Catholic connections, and his personal religious convictions. For example, F.P. Lock speculates about 'the character of his [Burke's] Christianity', and tries to answer the questions: 'what was Burke's personal faith? […] what ideas and concepts informed his faith?'.[545] Lock concludes that we should 'take him [Burke] seriously as a Christian' statesman; he agrees with Harvey C. Mansfield, that 'there is no clear reason to deny that Burke believes in a personal God', and is therefore a Christian.[546] Lock's study is biographical, and exemplary of numerous studies that are intended to ascertain what 'was exactly Burke's belief' (e.g., Latitudinarian Protestantism, Crypto-Catholicism); my study is not biographical, and is intended to understand the critical impression of Burke's representation of religion in his texts.[547] Other scholars who have focused on unearthing Burke's true religious identity include Conor Cruise O'Brien, Ian Crowe, and Christopher

[542] Bourke, 'Theory and Practice', p. 74.
[543] Conniff, p. 251.
[544] *Ibid.*, p. 258.
[545] F.P. Lock, 'Burke and Religion', pp. 35, 19.
[546] Lock, p. 32; Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. is another scholar who sees a need to defend Burke's personal beliefs as a Protestant and a Christian, in *Statesmanship and Party Government*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965), pp. 231–34.
[547] Lock, 'Burke and Religion', p. 36.

Hitchens. Christopher Hitchens speculates on Burke's true religious identity, arguing (like O'Brien) that Burke was 'probably a Catholic'.[548] Ian Crowe (like Lock) mentions Burke's Anglican-latitudinarian leanings, dispelling them as a disguise for Burke's crypto-Catholicism.[549] While latitudinarian openness to particular religious creeds could leave room for speculation about a secret subscription to Catholicism, I agree with Crowe—that this is probably not so in Burke's case. There are studies that carry the question of Burke's Catholic identity into their analysis of the *Reflections*. J.C.D. Clark's study on Burke's religion validates the claim made by O'Brien that, through the *Reflections*, Burke is actually a criticising Protestant Ascendancy through criticising Price (for celebrating the 1688 revolution).[550] O'Brien claims that Burke's *Reflections* '[…] is partially liberating—in a permissible way—a suppressed revolutionary part of his personality'.[551] Clark treats O'Brien's analysis of Burke as a romantic Jacobite, in 'emotional sympathy with the Catholics' with a measure of plausibility.[552] Nevertheless, such studies are biographical in nature, not interpretations of Burke's critical imprint. Lock, Crowe, Hitchens, Mansfield, O'Brien, and others, speculate on Burke's personal religious conviction; (as with my interpretation of Burke's early texts, and his writings on Ireland and India), such speculation is beyond the scope of my study of Burke's *Reflections*.[553]

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[548] Hitchens, 'Reactionary Prophet', p. 133.
[549] Crowe, *Patriotism and Public*, p. 52.
[550] Clark, 'Religious Affiliation', p. 1030.
[551] O'Brien, 'Ireland, Circumstances, Anti-communism', p. 162
[552] Clark, 'Religious Affiliation', pp. 1031–32
[553] Lock and Crowe, along with Conor Cruise O'Brien and Frederick Dreyer all speculate heavily on Burke's personal religious conviction: O'Brien (as discussed) makes the case for Burke as a crypto-Catholic, and Dreyer defends Burke as a devoted Anglican. O'Brien, *Melody*, p. 22; Frederick Dreyer, 'Burke's Religion', *Studies in Burke and His Time*, 17, (1976), 199–212, (p. 199).

In J.C.D. Clark's critical edition of the *Reflections* (as in his other studies of Burke), he identifies Burke as 'latitudinarian'—just as Lock and Crowe do. He briefly explains Burke's Anglican-latitudinarianism in the following historical and political context: 'committed against the view that any one denomination possessed either the sole authority to determine doctrine, or the only divinely ordained form of ecclesiastical polity'.[554] Clark is describing Burke's opposition to totalitarian authority of one sect over others in the *Reflections*; this resonates with Frederick Dryer's definition of latitudinarianism, discussed in the introduction to this thesis: 'tolerant and open-minded in matters of dogmatic orthodoxy'.[555] However, we must be careful in classifying any theme of toleration as latitudinarianism—especially when analysing Burke's *Reflections*, wherein he warns that 'the greatest of all intolerance' is achieved 'through a violence of toleration'.[556] Later in this chapter, we shall see how Burke explains that forced toleration is tyrannical.

I do not wish to oppose any of these biographical claims about Burke—from O'Brien, Crowe, Lock, or Clark. However, in this chapter I do wish to take issue with Clark's critical interpretation of the *Reflections*, which shapes an argument to discourage reading a religious context of the *Reflections*. Indeed, the fissure that opened between Burke and Charles James Fox over the matter of the French Revolution was, by a large measure, religious in nature[557] In Fox's speeches supporting the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts (March 1790), he laments that he:

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[554] Clark, Introduction to *Reflections*, p. 27.
[555] Dryer, 'Burke's Religion', p. 201.
[556] Burke, *Reflections, Writings*, VIII, p. 192.
[557] 'Fox, Sheridan, and other leading Whigs continued to support the principle of religious toleration therefore distanced them from Burke', Mitchell in Langford's *Writings*, IV, p. 8.

> […] must be reduced to the necessity of resifting the arguments of that Right Honourable Friend (Mr. Burke) whose political sentiments had, until lately, so perfectly coincided with his own, that he could never have conceived it within the power of events to render them divisible.[558]

It is the issue of religious toleration that renders Fox and Burke divisible. Burke presents his view on the matter in his *Reflections* when he targets the Revolution Society as one of the clubs and societies that advocated the relaxation of legislation, such as the Corporation Act of 1661 and Test Act of 1673. These acts imposed the sacraments and rites of the Church of England for the holders of public office, and Fox argued in favour of their relaxation:

> The origin of religious Toleration was of a recent date, indeed; and although it may have been theoretically adverted to, at an earlier period, not many years were as yet elapsed subsequently to its having been carried into practice. […] If they [the House] adverted to the first ages of mankind, when all was sunk in ignorance, barbarism and corruption, instead of indiscriminately fixing upon fanciful conclusions, they would ascend to first principles; and thence discover that persecution, and not Toleration, was the grand excitement to the public commission of the most atrocious crimes.[559]

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[558] Charles James Fox, *Two speeches, delivered in the House of Commons, on Tuesday the 2nd of March, 1790, by the Right Honourable Charles James Fox, in support of his motion for a repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts*, (London: J. Debrett, 1790), p. 69.

[559] Fox, *Speeches on repeal of Corporation and Test Acts*, pp. 5, 6; for more detailed studies on the fissure in the Whig party during the French revolution, and Burke's political role, see Francis O'Gorman, *The Whig Party and the French Revolution*, (London: L. MacMillan, 1967), p. xvi, 270; and L.G. Mitchell, *Charles James Fox and the Disintegration of the Whig Party, 1782–94*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), who traces the disintegration of the party to this fissure between Burke and Fox, p. 155.

Burke's departure from Fox on the issue above does not necessarily qualify him as a reactionary. Burke opposed the dissection and breaking apart of established tradition, viewing it as the tyranny of dissenting sects. We shall see how Burke reveals the religious toleration of the dissenting Revolution Society to be (as Fox says above) 'persecution'. It is my view that interpreting Burke's *Reflections* as solely a defence of hierarchy (as Clark does) is a restrictive interpretation that perpetuates interpretations of Burke as a reactionary-conservative; I counter such interpretations by suggesting his commentary surrounding the revolution is also a defence of religious cultural diversity and (constitutional) change. More broadly, however, the religious nature of the fissure above begins to justify how we can interpret Burke's response to the French Revolution in a religious context.

Exalting the Demonic; Blending Religious Design

The London Revolution Society was formed in 1788—the same year Burke was involved in the launching of the Hastings impeachment trial.[560] As is well known, it was one of many radical societies in Britain in the 1790s.[561] Mark Philp explains: '[…] eight societies were formed in and around Sheffield at the end of 1791 and the beginning of 1792; and societies were also formed in Liverpool, Stockport, Warrington, Leeds, Wakefield, Halifax, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Cambridge, Norwich, Great Yarmouth, Ipswich, Chester, Derby, Belper, Birmingham, Walsall, Coventry and

[560] Daniel E. White, *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 88–89.
[561] *Ibid.*, p. 214; see also Richard Brown, *Church and State in Modern Britain, 1700-1850*, (London: Routledge, 1991).

Wolverhampton.'[562] Philp suggests that these groups were worrisome to the government; however, John Seed investigates the possibility that Rational Dissenters were 'no more than a noisy metropolitan clique of intellectuals of little influence on, or connection to, the wider political culture'.[563] Edmund Burke certainly perceived the threat as genuine upon one particular occasion: on the 101st anniversary of the Glorious Revolution, the Revolutionary Society met to hear a sermon by Dr Richard Price, a dissenting minister at the centre of the society. The sermon, entitled *A Discourse on the Love of our Country* was delivered on 4 November 1789, and published by T. Cadell that same year.[564] Before Price's sermon in 1789, the revolutionary rumblings in France were increasingly cataclysmic: the Third Estate turned into the National Assembly on 17 June the Bastille was stormed on 14 July; on 2 November, the National Assembly began the auction of property from the French Church.[565] We know Burke read the sermon somewhere between his Parliamentary recess at Beaconsfield in the autumn of 1789 and his return to London in January of 1790.[566] By 13 February of 1790, the Assembly withdrew monastic authority, and instituted the Civil Constitution for the clergy by 12 July of that year.[567]

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[562] Mark Philp, ed., *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 6.
[563] John Seed, 'Rational Dissent and political opposition, 1770-1790', in *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by Knud Haakonssen, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 140–69, (p. 142).
[564] Richard Price, *A discourse on the love of our country, delivered on Nov. 4, 1789, at the meeting-house in the Old Jewry, to the Society for commemorating the revolution in Great Britain. With an Appendix, containing the Report of the Committee of the Society; an Account of the Population of France; and the Declaration of Rights by the National Assembly of France. Third Edition, with Additions to the Appendix, Containing Communications from France occasioned by the Congratulatory Address of the Revolution Society to the National Assembly of France, with the Answers to them*, (T. Cadell: Strand, London, 1790, first published 1789).; Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale, [3 August 2012].
[565] Peter McPhee, *The French Revolution, 1789-1799*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 1–5, and Appendix.
[566] Clark, Introduction to *Reflections*, p. 153; T.W. Copeland, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. T.W. Copeland, 10 vols, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958–78), vol. vi, pp. 67, 76.
[567] McPhee, pp. 1–5, and Appendix.

The Civil Constitution was intended to motion a more equitable method of taxation by levying tax on church property and land; in actuality, it led to the demotion of clergy power, and thereby Church power.[568] By 15 March 1790, The Assembly declared the *ancien régime* abolished; Burke perceived Price's sermon supporting all of this upheaval; his letter responding to Charles-Jean-Francois Depont's request for his opinion on these events also served as his response to Price, and became his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, published 1 November of that year.[569]

The demonic characterisation of the 'ghosts and phantoms that menaced the English Constitution' (e.g., the Revolution Society) occupies a large part of Burke's rhetorical energy in the *Reflections*. However, Mitchell's assessment begs elaboration. As with Mitchell, Richard Bourke's recent work on the *Reflections* is an observation of the rhetorical value in Burke's characterisation of his opponents:

> There can be no doubt that Burke blended the deliberate designs of revolutionary leaders, the unintended consequences of legislative action, and the objectives of diverse partisans of reform together into a single premeditated process that swept France in 1789. It is right to note the extent to which blanket judgments of the kind contributed to the process of polemical escalation characteristic of the Revolution's trajectory. But Burke's responsibility in this regard does not provide a justification for muddling his political intentions after the fact, nor for confusing his commitments with his propagandising methods. Burke's purpose can best

[568] A. Latreille, 'French Revolution' in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, (Detroit, MI: Gale Group, Catholic University of America, 2003), pp. 972–73.
[569] Clark, Introduction to *Reflections*, p. 20.

> be ascertained by the way he characterised his opponents. His hostility towards the *philosophes* was particularly directed at Voltaire, Rousseau, Turgot and Helvétius. Deism, democratic republicanism, physiocracy and moral materialism were most prominent among his targets. The diffusion of these doctrines not only had bred contempt for the idea of ethical restraint in Burke's judgement, but also had fostered a culture of intellectual conceit.[570]

While Bourke acknowledges the rhetorical value in Burke's characterisation of the French *philosophes*, and the doctrines associated with them, his assessment seems to underestimate the value in Burke's hostility specific to the Revolution Society. In fact, Burke is quite clear, in the first part of the *Reflections*, that it is the Revolution Society receiving the majority of his criticism:

> Since you have selected the Revolution Society as the great object of your national thanks and praises, you will think me excusable in making its late conduct the subject of my observations. The National Assembly of France has given importance to these gentlemen by adopting them; and they return the favour, by acting as a committee in England for extending the principles of the National Assembly.[571]

Below, Burke introduces the Revolution Society contemporaneously with the Constitution Society, which, according to Burke:

> […] intended for the circulation, at the expense of the members, of many books, which few others would be at the expense of buying […] Possibly

[570] Bourke, 'Theory and Practice', p. 90.
[571] Burke, *Reflections*, *Writings*, VIII, p. 55.

> several of them have been exported to France […] What improvements they have had in their passage (as it is said some liquors are meliorated by crossing the sea) I cannot tell: But I never heard a man of common judgment, or the least degree of information, speak a word in praise of the greater part of the publications circulated by that society; nor have their proceedings been accounted, except by some of themselves, as of any serious consequence. […] Until very lately I do not recollect to have heard of this club. I am quite sure that it never occupied a moment of my thoughts; nor I believe, those of any person out of their own set. I find upon enquiry, that on the anniversary of the Revolution in 1688, a club of dissenters, but of what denomination I know not, have long had the custom of hearing a sermon in one of their churches; and that afterwards they spent the day cheerfully, as other clubs do, as the tavern.[572]

By likening the publications of the club to liquor, and later explaining the regular practice of its members to visit the tavern following a sermon, Burke is constructing an image of a society that disseminates intoxicating material, and engages in habitual drunkenness. Further, by calling into question the denominational foundation of the club, Burke leaves room for speculation about its religious foundation and, therefore, political agenda: the member of this club could belong to any denomination, or even practice witchcraft (having changed the composition of the publications during their crossing of the sea). Their sermons are heard in 'their churches', which is conceivably opposed to what might be 'our churches' (i.e., the Church of England).

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[572] *Ibid.,* p. 56.

Burke continues to employ language that morally discredits the Revolution Society, and undermines any Christian character within. The passage below swells with disparaging innuendoes:

> On the forenoon of the 4th of November last, Doctor Richard Price, a non-conforming minister of eminence, preached at the dissenting meeting-house of the Old Jewry, to his club or honest society, a very extraordinary miscellaneous sermon, in which there are some good moral and religious sentiments, and not ill expressed, mixed up in a sort of porridge of various political opinions and reflections: but the revolution in France is the grand ingredient in the cauldron. I consider the address transmitted by the Revolution Society to the National Assembly, through Earl Stanhope, as originating in the principles of the sermon, and as a corollary from them. It was moved by the preacher of that discourse. It was passed by those who came reeking from the effect of the sermon, without any censure or qualification, expressed or implied. If, however any of the gentlemen concerned shall wish to separate the sermon from the resolution, they know how to acknowledge the one, and to disavow the other. They may do it: I cannot.
>
> For my part, I looked on that sermon as the public declaration of a man much connected with literary caballers, and intriguing philosophers; with political theologians, and theological politicians, both at home and abroad. I know they set him up as a sort of oracle; because, with the best intentions

> in the world, he naturally philippizes, and chaunts his prophetic song in exact unison with their designs.[573]

The backhanded compliment, when Burke describes Dr Price's sermon as 'extraordinary miscellaneous' sets the tone of Burke's rhetorical approach: to highlight the contradiction between the theory and practice of his subject, the Revolution Society. Burke goes on to describe Price's speech as 'not ill expressed'. This passive language delivers a compliment with underpinnings of negativity—after all, he did not describe Price's speech as being well expressed. Second, the reference to cauldron is meant to evoke the imagery of witchcraft, implying that dissenting religion is like witchcraft. Those who came from the sermon 'came reeking' of whatever concoction filled the cauldron. The hearers of the sermon were affected by chants and vapours from a potion.

As witchcraft was a felony punishable by death in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Burke's implication above could be inferred as quite inflammatory. While the eighteenth-century interpretation of witchcraft is less inflammatory, inasmuch as it was no longer perceived as a legitimate hazard, it was then perceived as a method of defrauding—as per the Witchcraft Act of 1735.[574]

Therefore, Burke's libellous metaphor of the cauldron could implicate Price as a swindler, as well as a leader in non-Christian practices. The implication of Price as a leader in Witchcraft, or Paganism (or anti-Anglican, or heterodox-Protestant) is further emphasized when Burke later refers to Price as an oracle. The metaphor of the cauldron is constructed for the purpose of implying a confederacy between the National Assembly,

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[573] *Ibid.*, p. 61.
[574] Marion Gibson, *Witchcraft and Society in England and America, 1550-1750*, ed. by Marion Gibson, (London: Continuum, 2003), p. 7.

the Revolutionary Society and its chair: Charles Stanhope, Third Earl Stanhope. Stanhope was a strong supporter of the French Revolution; his connections with radical dissenters (e.g. Joseph Priestley) accounts for his endorsement of Price's speech (Stanhope would later argue that parliament should acknowledge the new French republic, and not involve Britain in French affairs).[575]

The implied subversion of the Established Church is Burke's link between the dissenters of the Revolutionary Society with the French National Assembly: 'the Revolution in France is the grand ingredient in [Price's] cauldron'. Burke is implying that Price has bewitched his followers, and made them drunk with their own interest. In this way, he implies they are like the revolutionaries in France. This is the tyranny of the individual interest: 'The effect of liberty to individuals is, that they may do what they please: We ought to see what it will please them to do, before we risque congratulations, which may be soon turned into complaints. Prudence would dictate this in the case of separate insulated private men; but liberty, when men act in bodies, is power.'[576]

Even closer examination of the long passage above reveals how outrageous Burke's libellous rhetoric becomes. For example, Burke further implies that the effects of the sermon left its hearers stinking. However, the most libellous implications lie within suggestions of treason. Consider the meaning of 'cabal': 'to combine together for some secret of private end (usually in a bad sense)'.[577] Above, when Burke refers to the society as caballers, he is more specifically trying to compare them to the Cabal Ministry,

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[575] G.M. Ditchfield, 'Stanhope, Charles, third Earl of Stanhope, (1753-1816)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, 2004, [August 3rd, 2012]; see also J. Mori, *William Pitt and the French Revolution*, (Staffordshire, UK: Keele University Press, 1997).
[576] Burke, *Reflections*, *Writings*, VIII, p. 59.
[577] Oxford English Dictionary, 'cabal', <http://www.oed.com/>, [April 10th, 2011].

comprised of Sir Thomas Clifford, Lord Arlington, the Duke of Buckingham, Lord Ashley, and Lord Lauderdale, (whose initials spell out 'cabal'). It was perceived that this group attempted to subvert Parliament and monarchy, and describing them as literary caballers is meant to refer to the publishing of subversive literature—such as Price's sermon. Essentially, Burke is accusing the members of the Revolution Society of being conspirators against the monarchy—traitors.

Burke's rhetoric grows even more libellous as the description of Price's sermon continues:

> That sermon is in a strain which I believe has not been heard in this kingdom, in any of the pulpits which are tolerated or encouraged in it, since the year 1648, when a predecessor of Dr. Price, the Reverend Hugh Peters, made the vault of the king's own chapel at St. James's ring with the honour and privilege of the Saints, who, with the "high praises of God in their mouths, and a two-edged sword in their hands, were to execute judgment on the heathen, and punishments upon the people; to bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron."[578]

Above, is an implication of Price as the Reverend Peters, who was executed for assisting in the execution of Charles I—the definitive action of the English revolution of 1649.[579] Burke is depicting Price and his followers as violent regicides, and secret (albeit unwitting) republicans; their zeal for revolution may cloud their understanding of its realities. The Revolution Society claims to honour the Glorious Revolution of 1688, '[…] that event in this country to which the name of the Revolution has been given [...]';

[578] Burke, *Reflections, Writings*, VIII, p. 62.
[579] Mitchell, in *Reflections, Writings*, VIII, p. 62.

above, Burke is accusing them of actually commemorating the English revolution of 1649.[580] The accusation is more blatant in the following passage:

> These gentlemen of the Old Jewry, in all their reasonings on the Revolution of 1688, have a revolution which happened in England about forty years before, and the late French revolution, so much before their eyes, and in their hearts, that they are constantly confounding all the three together. It is necessary that we should separate what they confound. We must recall their erring fancies to the acts of the Revolution which we revere, for the discovery of its true principles of the Revolution of 1688 are any where to be found it is in the statue called the Declaration of Right. In that most wise, sober, and considerate declaration, drawn up by great lawyers and great statesmen, and not my warm and inexperienced enthusiasts [….].[581]

By accusing Price and his followers of glorifying the English revolution of 1649, Burke is accusing them of treason. This would have been a particularly inflammatory suggestion, as treason was still, technically, punishable by death in eighteenth-century England—treason being conceived of '[w]hen a man doth compass or imagine the death of our lord the king, of our lady his queen, or of their eldest son and heir'.[582] Further, by suggesting that the gentlemen of the Old Jewry confound together the French Revolution, the English revolution of 1649, and the revolution of 1688, out of which came a sober statute (the Declaration of Right), Burke is not only referring to a solemn and serious

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[580] Price, *Discourse*, p. 15.
[581] Burke, *Reflections*, *Writings*, VIII, p. 67.
[582] *Chase's Blackstone Commentaries on the Laws of England in Four Books*, ed. by Sir William Blackstone, vol. I, (New York: Baker, Voorhis & Co., 1936), p. 1481.

statute, but compounding the image of drunkenness introduced earlier in his description of this society.

More libel can be inferred from the long passage above in Burke's description of Price as philippizing. This jab is meant to bolster the inference of Price as a cult leader—when considered alongside the OED definition: 'To favour or take the side of Philip of Macedon; (hence more generally) to speak or write as one who has been wrongly or corruptly inspired or influenced'.[583] Philip of Macedon is associated with cult following; thus, readers infer Price is a cult leader. Therefore, Burke links any departure from the Established Church to treason. Burke means to classify French revolutionaries, and their sympathisers (e.g. the Revolution Society) as being non-Christian, and therefore, destructive to English polity.

As Richard Bourke rightly posits (in the quote above), Burke's main concern is with the diffusion of potentially harmful doctrines. Mark Philp validates that concern: there was a genuine fear of the extent to which dissenting societies were communicating with one another; the corn riots in Ireland (in 1792) later legitimized a fear of governmental subversion and domestic civil war.[584] **'**By the time war broke out with France in February 1793, popular politics in Britain had been deeply affected by the example of France.'[585] Philp further explains that British politics remained affected by this example for ten to fifteen years after 1793:

> […] the mass public meetings of 1795 and the 'Gagging Acts' which they elicited; the food and crimp riots of 1795-6 and the naval mutinies of

[583] Oxford English Dictionary, 'philippize', <http://www.oed.com/>, [April 10th, 2011].
[584] Philp, pp. 7–8.
[585] Philp, p. 8.

> 1797-8; the revolt in Ireland in 1798; the successive suspensions of habeaus corpus after 1794 and the outlawing of the London Corresponding Society, the United Englishmen, United Britons, United Irishmen, and United Scotsmen in 1799 […etc.].[586]

When Price's sermon encouraged the objection to established faith, it is valid that Burke would have interpreted it as the diffusion of the doctrine of dismantling the established faith characteristic of French mass politics: 'Those who dislike that mode of worship which is prescribed by public authority ought, if they can find no worship out of the church which they approve, to set up a separate worship for themselves […].'[587] Inasmuch as Price's sermon encouraged departing from established modes of worship, the Revolution Society represented the presence of a potentially destructive doctrine (one inherent in the ideology of the French *philosophes*) on English soil: the deposing of established religion. In the passage below, Burke interprets Price's sermon as advocating dissent for dissent's sake:

> This pulpit style, revived after so long a discontinuance, had to me the air of novelty, and of a novelty not wholly without danger. […] If the noble Seekers should find nothing to satisfy their pious fancies in the old staple of the national church, or in all the rich variety to be found in the well-assorted warehouses of the dissenting congregations, Dr. Price advises them to improve upon non-conformity; and to set up, each of them, a separate meeting-house upon his own particular principles. It is somewhat remarkable that this reverend divine should be so earnest for setting up

[586] Philp, p. 9.
[587] Price, *Discourse*, p. 18.

> new churches, and so perfectly indifferent concerning the doctrine which may be taught in them. His zeal is of a curious character. It is not for the propagation of his own opinions, but of any opinions. It is not for the diffusion of truth, but for the spreading of contradiction. Let the noble teachers but dissent, it is no matter from whom or from what. This great point once secured, it is taken for granted their religion will be rational and manly. […] It would certainly be a valuable addition of nondescripts to the ample collection of known classes, genera and species, which at present beautify the *hortus siccus* of dissent.[588]

Burke is accusing Price's valuing disagreement for the sake of its novelty, regardless of truth. What is more, the novelty with which Burke is branding Price is not harmless, but dangerous. Above, Burke warns that it is dangerous to encourage men to set up new modes of worship if they are displeased with the established ones. Burke also makes a hasty generalization that removes all definition of dissenting philosophies (by referring to them as 'nondescripts'), and classifies all types of dissent into one dry garden (*hortus siccus)*. Not only does Burke's figurative language help to convey his message; it is also exemplary of Bourke's point about blending the designs of the French *philosophes* revolutionaries. When Burke calls attention to the overzealousness of Price and his followers, he is criticising their ignorance about what they indeed, are reviving: they may be ignorant of succeeding Peters, and reviving the zealousness of the levellers of the

[588] Burke, *Reflections, Writings*, VIII, p. 62–63.

English Civil War. The fact that Price and the supporters of the French Revolution do not understand the extremeness of what they support is what Burke finds worrisome.[589]

In addition to the blending together of political design, to which Bourke refers, I argue that Burke's *Reflections* blends religious design. Burke continues to undermine Price's 'doctrine':

> His doctrines affect our constitution in its vital parts. He tells the Revolution Society, in this political sermon, that his majesty "is almost the only lawful king in the world, because the only one who owes his crown to the choice of his people." As to the kings of the world, all of whom (except one) this archpontiff of the rights of men, with all the plenitude, and with more than the boldness of the papal deposing power in its meridian fervour of the twelfth century, puts into one sweeping clause of ban and anathema, and proclaims usurpers by circles of longitude and latitude, over the whole globe, it behoves them to consider how they admit into their territories these apostolic missionaries, who are to tell their subjects, they are not lawful kings.[590]

Above, Burke refers to Price as a 'reverend divine', and later refers to him as 'this spiritual doctor of politics'. Obviously, this tactic is meant to devalue Price. He also calls him an 'archpontiff'; 'arch', as in pre-eminently papal. In fact, Burke makes further reference to the apostolic nature of Price's proposal. Albeit a Christian comparison, presumably, this tactic is meant to contribute to the host of other non-Anglican brandings

[589] On the debate over the Levellers as dangerous or more moderate, see Roger Howeel, Jr. and David E. Brewster, 'Reconsidering the Levellers: The Evidence of the Moderate,' in *Past and Present*, 46, (1970), pp. 68–86.
[590] Burke, *Reflections*, *Writings*, VIII, p. 64.

with which Burke associates Price throughout (e.g., the witchcraft and non-Christian brands above). The barrage of non-Anglican implications is representative of the way in which Burke implicates his targets in a 'diabolid'.

Burke writes:

> I think it very probable, that for some purpose, new members may have entered among them; and that some truly Christian politicians, who love to dispense benefits, but are careful to conceal the hand which distributes the dole, may have made them the instruments of their pious designs.[591]

The irony in Burke's rhetoric, of course, is that while he pretends to believe that the Revolution Society might contain some true Christians, he then goes on to imply that they are actually non-Christian, and therefore, traitors—even though Price and his followers would have seen themselves as true Christians, leading the world into a new Christian golden age.[592] Burke conceptually generalizes all agencies that would dissent from the Anglican Church in a diabolic force placed in opposition to the functionality of English polity.

This reveals a dimension to Burke's rhetorical agenda that Mitchell does not appreciate: his demonic characterisation of all of the 'ghosts and phantoms that menaced the English Constitution' exists symbiotically with an emphasis on the godly characterisation of English polity. By exalting the godliness of English polity, Burke is able to escalate the characterisation of his opponents from questionably non-Anglican, to Atheist-sympathizers, to inherently evil and tyrannical. He exalts the sacredness of

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[591] *Ibid.*, p. 56.
[592] Nigel Aston, *Christianity and Revolutionary Europe, 1750–1830*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 105.

English Christian polity, by exalting the evil polity of his targets.

Burke sets up a clear scenario in which England stands in opposition to France, where religious fortitude is concerned. For example, Burke draws a differential between the commendable religious conditioning of the youth in England, and the irreligious conditioning of the French youth. He explains that the English youth, from infancy into manhood, are conditioned to appreciate the religious foundation of their constitution:

> It is on some such principles that the majority of the people of England, far from thinking a religious, national establishment unlawful, hardly think it lawful to be without one. […] This principle runs through the whole system of their polity. They do not consider their church establishment as convenient, but as essential to their state […]. They consider it as the foundation of their whole constitution, with which, as with every part of which, it holds an indissoluble union. Church and state are ideas inseparable in their minds […] Our education is so formed as to confirm and fix this impression. Our education is a manner wholly in the hands of ecclesiastics, and in all stages from infancy to manhood.[593]

Indeed, it is in the preservation of the constitutional principle of hereditary right that prevents the youth of England from becoming susceptible to the sort of corruption that is liable to occur from power, hastily procured through the destruction of religious establishment (e.g., the curtailing of Church power in the Civil Constitution of the Clergy). This corruption of youth by hastily procured power is the same to which he refers in his writings on India. Referring to the youths in service of the Company, who

[593] Burke, *Reflections*, *Writings*, VIII, p. 149.

were installed in positions of power in a corrupt system, Burke writes that such a procurement of power for undeveloped moral character is intoxicating:

> But as English youth in India drink the intoxicating draught of authority and dominion before their heads are able to bear it, and as they are full grown in fortune long before they are ripe in principle, neither nature nor reason have any opportunity to exert themselves for remedy of the excesses of their premature power.[594]

The sort of impiousness resultant of procuring wealth or power suddenly, such as that procurement that happens with the impetuous upheaval of religious establishment, is avoided in England because of the 'virtues which dispense hereditary wealth', and power.[595] In the *Reflections*, Burke largely blames the infusion of destructive thinking into French youths on Jean-Jacques Rousseau—his writings, e.g., *The Social Contract* (1766), and *Confessions* (1782). Burke writes, '[t]hey infuse into their youth an unfashioned, indelicate, sour, gloomy, ferocious medley of pedantry and lewdness; of metaphysical speculations, blended with the coarsest sensuality'.[596]

> We [the English] are not the converts of Rousseau; we are not the disciples of Voltaire; Helvetius has made no progress amongst us. Atheists are not our preachers; madmen are not our lawgivers.[597]

Burke continues to attend equally the religiousness of English culture with the irreligiousness of French culture: atheism might be acceptable in France, but it will not be tolerated in England. More specifically, above, Burke is not only criticising the hasty

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[594] Burke, Speech on Fox's East India Bill, *Writings*, V, p. 402–93.
[595] *Ibid.*, p. 311.
[596] Burke, *Reflections*, *Writings*, VIII, p. 317.
[597] *Ibid.*, p. 137.

perfunctory demotion of the established religion in France, but also referring to Rousseau's proclivity for doing the same: in his *Confessions*, Rousseau writes of making a perfunctory conversion to Catholicism for a woman.[598]

The above passages also demonstrate Burke's conceptual blending of religious design. The revolutionaries mentioned by Burke in the above passage held differing ideologies; yet, Burke blends the designs of Rousseau, Voltaire, and others by uniting them underneath a broad label of atheism. Burke would have known that most revolutionaries were Deists, not Atheists.[599] In this way, Burke makes all freethinking, or Christian-heterodoxy, synonymous with atheism. We can seat this form of Burke's representation of religions in eighteenth-century rhetorical strategy. J.G.A. Pocock, for example, explains this blending as a rhetorical function; he describes a 'genuine offensive' resulting from the fear of deism that first appeared in the late seventeenth century:

> [T]he word [deism] began to be used of heterodox Christianities and near-Christianities of every kind; it is of course a notable fact of history that so many heterodoxies were to be found at this time, as at others. […] the term "deism" was used to indicate many kinds of scepticism and became a generalised term of abuse; there were more 'unbelievers' than there were "atheists", real or fancies […].[600]

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[598] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions: and Correspondence, including the letters to Malesherbes*, (1782) (Dartmouth: Dartmouth College: University press, New England, 1995), pp. 54, 128.
[599] Mitchell, in *Reflections*, in *Writings*, IV, p. p. 161; O'Brien, p. 411; Clark, Introduction to *Reflections*, p. 397.
[600] Pocock, *Barbarism*, V, p. 218.

The application of the term ‘deist’ to various forms of Christian heterodoxy is one example. Another example is the way in which John Locke discouraged the indiscriminate application of the term ‘atheist’ to various form of heterodoxy, because of the severity of the accusation:

> [A]theism being a crime, which for its madness as well as guilt, ought to shut a man out of all sober and civil society, should be very warily charged on any one, by deductions and consequences, which he himself does not own, or, at least, do not manifestly and unavoidably flow from what he asserts.[601]

We can also seat the way Burke represents differing sects of Christian heterodoxy as a reduction into atheism in the ancient versus post-feudal parameters defining our framework for modernity in this thesis. Pocock explains that William Warburton thought of ancient, pre-Reformation, philosophers as atheists in some form:

> [William] Warburton does not think the ancient (perhaps pre-Newtonian) philosophers capable of contemplating nature and arriving at the being of God. When they were not atheists in the sense that they were sceptics, they were atheists in the sense that they were pantheists; in a culture where there were gods for everything, it was easy to draw, perhaps hard to escape, the conclusion that everything was God and God everything.[602]

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[601] John Locke, *A Vindication of the Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), in *The Works of John Locke*, 9 vols, (London: C and J Rivington, 1824), VI, pp. 159–91, (p. 161–62).
[602] Pocock, *Barbarism*, V, p. 235.

We will see in Burke's late writings (in the next chapter of this thesis) how Burke represents the destruction of religious establishment as 'Atheism by establishment'.[603] Burke viewed the destruction and disenfranchisement of religious establishment as atheism in practice; which brings us to Burke's representation of sacrilege. Referring to the methods taken to disenfranchise the Catholic clergy, Burke writes:

> By a cruel and malicious refinement upon tyranny, they have at length reduced the clergy to this terrible alternative; wither with a solemn oath to ratify the destruction of their church, or to escape from its ruins, committing what remains to mercenaries […]. The Constitutional Clergy are not the Ministers of any religion; they are the agents and instruments of this horrible conspiracy against all morals […].[604]

Burke represents the 'ministers' of the Constitutional Clergy as ministers of irreligion, ministers of a religion without religion. The Civil Constitution was meant to institute a more equitable method of taxation, but resulted in the destruction of religious monuments and churches.[605] Radical newspapers such as *Le Père Duchesne*, The Paris Mercury, and The Union Journal of Liberty, published articles in support of such acts, and encouraged the scrutiny of religious establishments[606] We can conceive of this as the misappropriation of consecrated properties. Here is where I disagree with Clark, who argues that Burke's concern over the destruction of the French church was not outrage over sacrilege, but the fear of theft. Sacrilege is:

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[603] Burke, *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*, *Writings*, IX, pp. 191, 241–42.
[604] Burke, *Reflections*, *Writings*, VIII, p. 485.
[605] Latreille, A. 'French Revolution' in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, V, (Detroit, MI: Gale Group, Catholic University of America, 2003), pp. 972–73.
[606] For more on the Pére Duchesne, and its editor Jacques Hérbert, see William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 227.

> The crime or sin of stealing or misappropriating what is consecrated to God's service. In the ecclesiastical use, extended to include any kind of outrage on consecrated persons or things, and the violation of any obligation having a sacramental character, or recognized as under the special protection of the Church.[607]

Surely, the property of the Church is perceived as consecrated to God's service; therefore, the new government's re-appropriation of it (or the stealing or misappropriation of it) is sacrilege. Burke even highlights the confiscation of Church property as marking a descent into barbarity, which is directly opposed to the civility imbued by the Church:

> They have found their punishment in their success: laws overturned; tribunals subverted; industry without vigor; commerce expiring; the revenue unpaid, yet the people impoverished; a church pillaged, and a state not relieved; civil and military anarchy made the constitution of the kingdom; everything human and divine sacrificed to the idol of public credit, and national bankruptcy the consequence; and, to crown all, the paper securities of new, precarious, tottering power, the discredited paper securities of impoverished fraud and beggared rapine, held out as a currency for the support of an empire in lieu of the two great recognized species that represent the lasting, conventional credit of mankind, which disappeared and hid themselves in the earth from whence they came, when

[607] Oxford English Dictionary, 'sacrilege', <http://www.oed.com/>, [August 3rd, 2012]

> the principle of property, whose creatures and representatives they are, was systematically subverted.[608]

Clark is right in thinking that Burke expresses fear about confiscation being set as a precedent for the generation of government revenue that would undermine traditional practices of order, inheritance, and privilege; further that he fears England's appropriation of such a method:

> It is not the confiscation of our church property from this example in France that I dread, though I think this would be no trifling evil. The great source of my solicitude is, lest it should ever be considered in England as the policy of a sate to seek a resource in confiscations of any kind; or that any one description of citizens should be brought to regard any of the others as their proper prey.[609]

Yet, Burke articulates a genuine concern for the epidemic secularization of France, calling the seizure of Church property by the state 'no trifling evil'. What really disproves Clark's observation, however, is that Burke extends his outrage beyond confiscation of Church property; Burke extends his outrage to include the misappropriation of public faith. The faith of a people is also consecrated, sacred:

> This outrage on all the rights of property was at first covered with what, on the system of their conduct, was the most astonishing of all pretexts—a regard to national faith. […] It is impossible to avoid some observation on the contradictions caused by the extreme rigour and the extreme laxity of the new public faith, which influenced in this transaction, and which

[608] Burke, *Reflections*, *Writings*, VIII, p. 89–90.
[609] *Ibid.*, p. 203.

> influenced not according to the nature of the obligation, but to the description of the persons to whom it was engaged. No acts of the old government of the kings of France are held valid in the National Assembly, except its pecuniary engagements; acts of all others of the most ambiguous legality.[610]

Contrary to Clark, I argue that Burke's outrage is not just at theft; it is also (and I would argue, chiefly) at sacrilege. The passage below demonstrates Burke's fear of abolishing Christianity, as it is not only central to British polity, but social stability in general. Specifically turning attention to his addressee (Depont), Burke writes:

> In short, Sir, it seems to me that this new ecclesiastical establishment is intended only to be temporary, and preparatory to the utter abolition, under any of its forms, of the Christian religion, whenever the minds of men are prepared for this last stroke against it, by the accomplishment of the plan for bringing its ministers into universal contempt.[611]

In other words, the confiscation of Church property is a step toward the oligarchic abolition of the Christian religion. '[T]he pillage of the ecclesiastics', as Burke calls it, is not only sacrilege, but tyrannical bigotry.[612] Essentially, actions like the nationalisation of the Catholic Church in France amount to religious persecution disguised as egalitarian measures. Below, Burke explains that forced benevolence is, in fact, tyranny, 'The will of the many, and their interest, must very often differ; and great will be the difference when

[610] *Ibid.*, p. 156–57.
[611] *Ibid.*, p. 197.
[612] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

they make an evil choice'.[613] Burke goes on to explain that the clergy is not an entity without corruption—'being acquired [in both England and France] by unworthy methods'—but argues that the disposal of that entity, which he equates with atheism, would only invite evil and mischief in greater proportion to any that already exists within the established form of religion:

> I know well enough that the bishopries and cures, under kingly and seignoral patronage, as now they are in England, and as they have been lately in France, are sometimes acquired by unworthy methods; but the other mode of ecclesiastical canvas subjects them infinitely more surely and more generally to all the evil arts of low ambition, which operating on and through greater numbers, will produce mischief in proportion. Those of you who have robbed the clergy, think that they shall easily reconcile their conduct to all protestant nations; because the clergy, whom they have thus plundered, degraded, and given over to mockery and scorn, are of the Roman Catholic, that is, of their own pretended persuasion. I have no doubt that some miserable bigots will be found here as well as elsewhere, who hate sects and parties different from their own, more than they love the substance of religion […] They [France] preferred atheism to a form of religion not agreeable to their ideas. They succeeded in destroying that form [Catholicism]; and atheism has succeeded in destroying them.[614]

He focuses on the destruction of religion in France, and declares that any approval of such conduct found in his Protestant nation (e.g. the support from the Revolution Society)

[613] *Ibid.,* p. 103.
[614] *Ibid.,* p. 198.

indicates the hate of a differing religious sect. He insinuates that the Revolution Society is comprised of bigots—religious persecutors, as opposed to advocates for religious tolerance. He accuses them of being bigoted atheists, intolerant of differing factions of Christianity; above, he specifically refers to bigotry against the Roman Catholic faction. This contributes to countering claims from critics like O'Brien and O'Flaherty, who elsewhere highlight 'Burkean silence' surrounding popery and Burke's 'avoidance' of the Catholic question; above, Burke publicises advocacy for the toleration of Catholics.[615] In a way, Burke's argument for the co-existence of differing religions refutes Clark's claim that Burke's comments surrounding the French Revolution are not that of a co-religionist. This progressive thinking renders the relative cultural legitimacy between differing sects familiar.

Burke continues to construct a rhetorical shadow of demonic character, which is cast over all who would usurp an established faith. He further accuses the Revolutionary Society of conspiring to destroy the Christian religion:

> The literary cabal had some years ago formed something like a regular plan for the destruction of the Christian religion. This object they pursued with a degree of zeal which hitherto had been discovered only in the propagators of some system of piety. […] Atheistical fathers have a bigotry of their own; and they have learnt to talk against monks with the spirit of a monk. […] To this system of literary monopoly was joined an unremitting industry to blacken and discredit in every way, and by every means, all those who did not hold to their faction. To those who have

[615] O'Brien, p. 161; O'Flaherty, p. 15.

> observed the spirit of their conduct, it has long been clear that nothing was wanted but the power of carrying the intolerance of the tongue and of the pen into a persecution which would strike at property, liberty, and life.[616]

By colouring the Revolutionary Society as bigots, persecuting any faction different from their own, Burke emerges as an advocate for religious freedom.

As he describes it above, the will of the many inherent in a democracy can also harbour democracy's potential for tyranny. Burke's rhetoric illustrates this ironic flaw inherent within the revolutionary actions of the National Assembly in the following passage:

> I do not know under what description to class the present ruling authority in France. It affects to be a pure democracy, though I think it in a direct train of becoming shortly a mischievous and ignoble oligarchy. But for the present I admit it to be a contrivance of the nature and effect of what it pretends to. I reprobate no government on abstract principles. […] Until now, we have seen no examples of considerable democracies. The ancients were better acquainted with them. Not being wholly unread in authors, who had seen the most of those constitutions, and who best understood them, I cannot help concurring with their opinion, that an absolute democracy, no more than absolute monarchy, is to be reckoned among the legitimate forms of government. They think it rather the corruption and degeneracy, than the sound constitution of a republic. If I recollect rightly, Aristotle observes, that a democracy has many striking

[616] Burke, *Reflections*, *Writings*, VIII, p. 160–61.

> points of resemblance with a tyranny. Of this I am certain, that in a democracy, the majority of the citizens is capable of exercising the most cruel oppressions upon the minority, whenever strong divisions prevail in that kind of polity, as the often must; and that oppression of the minority will extend to far greater numbers, and will be carried on with much greater fury, than can almost ever be apprehended from a single sceptre.[617]

Burke writes that the National Assembly is a counterfeit: it purports to be a democracy, but is actually an oligarchy. It is an oligarchy inasmuch as it engenders the oppression of the minority (e.g., through the nationalisation of the French Church). This is the same sort of accusation he lays against the Revolution Society: they purport to be Christians, but are actually (perhaps unwittingly) non-Anglican traitors. The unbridled will of the many (in 'an absolute democracy') is just as dangerous as the potential despotism of an 'absolute monarchy'. I argue that here again emerges the progressive Burke, arguing for the freedom of what—in revolutionary France—have become marginalized people: Catholics. In addition, Burke's aversion to absolute monarchy above hardly seems like a reactionary argument for (as Eagleton thought of Burke's response to the French Revolution) 'the full-blooded restoration of *the ancien régime*'.[618] Indeed, Burke's view on pure monarchy further contributes to our appreciation of him as progressive (and, therefore modern): In his earlier *Essay towards an Abridgment of the English History*, Burke identified 'the worst imaginable government, a feudal aristocracy'.[619] Again, if we

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[617] *Ibid.*, p. 174.
[618] Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 35; also Monk, 'Changing Definition', p. 65.
[619] Edmund Burke, *An Essay towards an Abridgment of the English History* (157–?), in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: The early writings*, ed. by T.O. McLoughlin, Paul Langford, James, T. Boulton, and William B. Todd, 9 vols, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), I, pp. 332–552, (p. 547).

measure 'modernity' as emerging out of ancient, post-feudalism, then Burke's aversion to a restoration of pure feudalism can be interpreted as promoting modernity. Before we further consider Burke's writings on France in the context of modernity, however, a deeper examination of Burke's use of evil and irreligious themes in his representation of religion is needed.

The Sacredness of the Profane; A Counterbalance to the Reactionary Burke

According to Burke, the form of tyranny inherent in the National Assembly's version of democracy has made the profane sacred:

> She (France) has sanctified the dark suspicious maxims of tyrannous distrust; and taught kings to tremble at (what will hereafter be called) the delusive plausibilities, of moral politicians […] Such sanguine declarations tend to lull authority asleep; to encourage it rashly to engage in perilous adventures of untried policy; to neglect those provisions, preparations, and precautions, which distinguished benevolence from imbecility; and without which no man can answer for the salutary effect of any abstract plan of government or of freedom. For want of these, they have seen the medicine of the state corrupted into its poison. They have seen the French rebel against a mild and lawful monarch, with more fury and outrage, and insult, than ever any people has been known to rise against the most illegal usurper, or the most sanguinary tyrant.[620]

Above, Burke insinuates that the French have sanctified the maxims of tyranny by submitting to the tyranny that is the will of a few (the Assembly) over the many. The

[620] Burke, *Reflections, Writings*, VIII, p. 89.

Assembly has made the holy (the Church) unholy (or, at least rendered it politically and economically impotent against the state). Describing the maxims of the rebel force as dark and suspicious implies practices that are suspect of a diabolical nature. Submitting to this distrust has introduced a tyranny far more furious than that of the most barbarous tyrant.

The upheaval of religious establishment emerges as a conspiracy of irreligion in Burke's *Reflections*, along with his other writings responding to the French Revolution, for example his *Thoughts on French Affairs*. This was Burke's appeal to government ministers for official support of counter French revolutionaries; the document argued that the longer the new government in France prevailed, the more pervasive its proclivity for upheaval would become in Europe. In his *Thoughts*, Burke refers to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, instituted by the National Constituent Assembly, 26 August 1789.[621] Burke warns that the 'Declaration of a new species of government, on new principles' represents 'a real crisis in the politicks of Europe'.[622] I argue that we can also see Burke facing a sacrilegious crisis in Europe. He conveys a paranoiac worry about a system of irreligious thinking positioned to undermine religious establishment:

> In the meantime a system of French conspiracy is gaining ground in every country. This system happening to be founded on principles the most delusive indeed, but the most flattering to the natural propensities of the unthinking multitude, and to the speculations of all those who think,

[621] See William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).
[622] Edmund Burke, *Thoughts on French Affairs* (1791), in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: The French Revolution, 1790-1794*, ed. by Paul Langford et al., 9 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), VIII, pp. 338–85, (p. 340).

> without thinking very profoundly, must daily extend its influence. A predominant inclination towards it appears in all those who have no religion, when otherwise their disposition leads them to be advocates even for despotism. Hence Hume, though I cannot say that he does not throw out some expressions of disapprobation on the proceedings of the levellers in the reign of Richard II., yet affirms that the doctrines of John Ball were "conformable to the ideas of primitive equality, *which are engraven in the hearts of all men*".[623]

Quoting from Hume's *History of England* (1782), Burke's refers to John Ball: a figure of Christian radicalism, Ball was noteworthy for leading the 1381 peasant revolt; however, Burke here would have been referring to Ball as a figure for advocating the overthrow of authority—a figure of irreligion masquerading as a figure of religion—like the Revolutionary Society and the National Assembly.[624] Linking Hume with such a figure is conceivably gesture toward the question over Hume's own religious affiliation: he was accused of atheism, and enjoyed the company of the French *philosophes* (e.g., Rousseau and Helvétius), although, he later had a falling out with Rousseau, denouncing him as a madman.[625] Burke characterizes Rousseau as the leader of an irreligious cult in his *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* (much like he characterised Price in *Reflections*): 'Rousseau is their canon of holy writ; in his life he is their canon of Polycletus; he is their

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[623] *Ibid.*, p. 369.
[624] David Hume, *History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to The Revolution in 1688*, 8 vols, (T. Cadell: London, 1782), III, p. 7; Charles Maurice, *Lives of English Popular Leaders in the Middle Ages: Tyler, Ball, and Oldcastle*, (London: King & Co., 1875), (reprinted by Kessinger Publishing: USA, 2004).
[625] John Robertson, 'Hume, David (1711-1776)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, August 3rd, 2012.

standard figure of perfection.'[626]

Earlier in his *Thoughts,* Burke also displays a paranoia bordering on conspiracy theory:

> In this very delicate situation of their political interests, the speculations of the French and German *Oeconomists,* and the cabals, and the secret, as well as public doctrines of the *Illuminatenordens* and *Free Masons,* have made considerable progress in that country; and a turbulent spirit under colour of religion, but in reality arising from the French Rights of Man, has already shewn itself, and is ready on every occasion to blaze out.[627]

Darrin M. McMahon toys with the image of Burke as a conspiracy theorist—afraid of the French *philosophes* repeating such plots as the one perpetrated by the Bavarian Illuminati, who intended to infiltrate and overthrow the French monarchy and its church.[628] McMahon explains that Burke would have heard the whispers of conspiracies such as Adam Weishaupt's plot to overthrow clerical reign by planning to […] 'infiltrate established Masonic lodges throughout Europe.'[629] '[T]he Illuminati, or "enlightened ones", hoped to use these organizations as fronts to spread their own republican egalitarian, and anticlerical beliefs.'[630] We can place Burke's paranoia about a veritable conspiracy to usurp Christianity in Europe in context with other eighteenth-century warnings of an irreligious enterprise. East Apthorp's 1778 *Letters on the Prevalence of*

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[626] A member of the National Assembly, Francios-Louis Thibault, had written to Burke about his *Reflections* in November of 1790; the response is *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* (1791), in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: The French Revolution, 1790–1794,* ed. by Paul Langford, and L.G. Mitchell, 9 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), VIII, pp. 294–333. (p. 312).
[627] Burke, *Thoughts on French* Affairs, *Writings,* VIII, p. 360.
[628] Darrin M. McMahon, 'Edmund Burke and the Literary Cabal, A Tale of Two Enlightenments', in *Reflections on the Revolution in France,* ed. by Frank M. Turner, *Ibid.,* p. 241.
[629] McMahon, p. 241.
[630] *Ibid.,* p. 241.

Christianity, before its Civil Establishment, with Observations on a Late History of the Decline of the Roman Empire also worried about an organised effort to eliminate the Christian establishment:

> It is a prevailing idea, that an attempt to extirpate, if it were possible, the Christian Religion, hath been carried on in this century systematically and in concert by a series of writers and their numerous disciples […] This impious enterprize, if it did not originate, has principally disclosed itself in France […] To carry on this design, all the sciences have been pressed into the service of irreligion, in an enormous encyclopaedia, the work of the whole conclave.[631]

Agnani refers to the 'paranoiac quality' of the rhetoric in Burke's *Reflections*[632] Richard Bourke argues that if readers want to understand the extreme rhetoric in Burke's *Reflections*, 'We need to restore the sense of exuberance, the feeling of alarm and the mounting suspicion entertained by the various British and French spectators of the early stages of the Revolution […]'.[633] It is Burke's fear of monopolistic factions unnecessarily overthrowing establishments that inspires outrageous rhetoric:

> [W]ith you [France], we have seen an infancy still more feeble, growing by moments into a strength to heap mountains upon mountains, and to wage a war with Heaven itself. Whenever our neighbour's house is on fire, it cannot be amiss for the engines to play a little on our own. Better to be

[631] East Apthorp, *Letters on the Prevalence of Christianity, before its Civil Establishment, with Observations on a Late History of the Decline of the Roman Empire*, (London: J. Robinson, New Bond Street, 1778), p. 184–85.
[632] Agnani, p. 150.
[633] Bourke, 'Theory and Practice', p. 86.

> despised for too anxious apprehensions, than ruined by too confident a security.[634]

Burke writes that being too anxious is better than being too complaisant. We can think of the war with heaven in reference to the nationalization of the church in France, and the confiscation of its land and property, etc. Any force that would wage war against that which is sacred, conceivably, must be anti-sacred—or sacrilege.

An outrageous sense of alarm calls for outrageous rhetoric. In the following passage from the *Reflections*, Burke admits exploiting theatricality in his writing style when he expresses his astonishment that Price is not equally concerned about the events in France.

> Why do I feel so differently from the Reverend Dr. Price, and those of his lay flock, who will choose to adopt the sentiments of his discourse?—For this plain reason—because it is natural I should; because we are so made as to be affected at such spectacles with melancholy sentiments upon the unstable condition of mortal prosperity […] We are alarmed into reflexion; our minds (as it has long since been observed) are purified by terror and pity […] Some tears might be drawn from me, if such a spectacle were exhibited on the stage.[635]

Burke admits that if the spectacle he describes were shown on the stage, it would elicit tears from the audience. Burke is referring to his famous description of Marie

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[634] Burke, *Reflections*, *Writings*, VIII, p. 60.
[635] *Ibid.*, pp. 131–32.

Antoinette.[636] In basic theatrical terms, Burke is recollecting the classical drama theory of Aristotle: that perfect tragedy should excite pity and fear.[637] He is also facing the real-life manifestation of his theories on terror, which he outlined thirty-four years previously, in his *Enquiry*: Burke argues that his sense of alarm is most natural.[638]

> We fear God; we look up with awe to kings, with affection to parliaments, with duty to magistrates, with reverence to priests, and with respect to nobility. Why ? Because when such ideas are brought before our minds, it is natural to be so affected; because all other feelings are false and spurious, and tend to corrupt our minds, to vitiate our primary morals, to render us unfit for rational liberty; and by teaching us a servile insolence, to be our low sport for a few holidays, to make us perfectly fit for, and justly deserving of, slavery through the whole course of our lives.[639]

For Burke, to express alarm at the impending terror of the French Revolution is natural. Richard Bourke makes a strong argument for this: he proposes that Burke's extraordinary rhetoric (e.g. his approach to the Marie Antoinette scenario) was proportionate to an extraordinary sense of urgency.[640] Burke's rhetoric was provoked by his perception that

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[636] 'History will record, that on the morning of the 6th of October 1789, the king and queen of France, after a day of confusion, alarm, dismay, and slaughter, lay down, under the pledged security of public faith, to indulge nature in a few hours of respite, and troubled melancholy repose. From this sleep the queen was first startled by the voice of the centinel at her door, who cried out to her, to save herself by flight—that this was the last proof of fidelity he could give that they were upon him, and he was dead. Instantly he was cut down. A band of cruel ruffians and assassins, reeking with his blood, rushed into the chamber of the queen, and pierced with an hundred strokes of bayonets and poniards the bed, from whence this persecuted woman had but just time to fly almost naked, and through ways unknown to the murderers had escaped to seek refuge at the feet of a king and husband, not secure of his own life for a moment.' *Ibid.*, p. 122–23.
[637] Aristotle, 'Poetics', *Classical Literary Criticism*, trans. by Penelope Murray and T.S. Dorsch, (Penguin Books, London: 2000). pp. 57–97.
[638] 'No passion so effectually robs the mind of all its powers of acting and reasoning as fear […]'. Burke, *Enquiry*, *Writings*, I, p. 230.
[639] Burke, *Reflections*, *Writings*, VIII, p. 137–38.
[640] Bourke, 'Theory and Practice', p. 86.

the Reverend Price and his nephew George Cadogan Morgan regarded the usurpation of a monarch as a shining example of vengeance:

> Burke's notoriously indulgent depiction of the treatment of Marie Antoinette immediately before her escape to the Tuileries with her husband on 6 October should be understood for what it was: an extravagant response to what looked like the extraordinary provocation offered by figures like Morgan and Price in casting an incident of popular outrage as an act of righteous retribution.[641]

In short, Burke's outrageous description of Marie-Antoinette's escape was simply a rhetorically appropriate tactic to address what he regarded as the exceptional danger inherent in Price's sermon: the dispensation of destructive thinking. His flamboyant language is also probably proportioned to reverse the effects of Price's sermon.

Of course, history has proven the accuracy of the prophecies delivered in Burke's *Reflections*: King Louis the XVI was executed on January 21, 1793 in the *Place de la Révolution*; Marie Antoinette suffered the same fate, in the same place, nine months later on October 16. Burke's description of the executions, as well as his accusations of treason against Price above, are interesting when analysed in the context of eighteenth-century treason laws. John Barrell explains that eighteenth-century law declared, 'To communicate in writing, an intention to kill the king could be alleged as an overt act of treason […]'.[642] Some looser interpretations of this law extended to spoken intentions of

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[641] *Ibid.*, p. 86.
[642] John Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death: figurative treason, Fantasies of Regicide, 1793-1796*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 34.

killing the king, which qualified as 'imagine[d]' treason.[643] Above, while Burke does not write of his own intention to kill King Louis the XVI and Marie Antoinette, his description is a vivid imagining of the scenario as it would play out; which is, in a way, complicit with imagining treason. Barrell describes Burke's rhetoric as alarmism: 'Apparently free himself of all imaginary fears, he deliberately set out to "disturb" or "terrify" the imagination of the public at large by inventing fictitious threats to national security'.[644] While these threats (of regicide) would later prove not to be fictitious, Barrell helps us to understand the way in which eighteenth-century alarmists gave a voice to the very themes against which they were arguing—in a way, complying with the themes antithetical to their message. In his writings on France, Burke's representation of religion, for example, is dependent on themes antithetical to religion; he represents atheism, evil, and demonism with enthusiasm equal to his enthusiasm in representing religious establishment. Much like when he referred to the Hastings administration 'unbaptizing' themselves when governing abroad, Burke's representation of religion is often shadowed by the themes antithetical to religion; Burke's responses to the French Revolution reveal a dimension in Burke's thinking wherein the sacred and profane are interdependent.[645]

Burke's response to the events unfolding in France differed from other Whigs, who (like Price) perceived a parallel with the Glorious Revolution. Charles James Fox,

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[643] *Ibid.*, p. 35.
[644] *Ibid.*, p. 16.
[645] 'As if, when you have crossed the equinoctial line all the virtues die, as they say some animals die when they cross the line, as if there were a kind of baptism, like that practices by seamen, by which they *unbaptize* themselves of all that they learned in Europe, and commence a new order and system of things.' Burke, *The Launching of the Hastings Impeachment*, *Writings*, IV, p. 346.

leader of the Whig opposition, advocated the right to overthrow oppressive authority.[646] Reacting to the fall of the Bastille, Fox pronounced, 'How much the greatest event it is that ever happened in the world, & how much the best.'[647] L.G. Mitchell writes the following about Fox's reaction:

> Predictably Fox had no sympathy with the arguments put forward in Burke's *Reflections* […]. Burke's belief that the revolution represented a profound threat to the ideas of propertied government, organized religion, and prescriptive values in politics, bringing with it confusion and violence, seemed strangely at odds with what Fox knew of France at first hand. He read the book but found it 'in very bad taste' and 'favouring Tory principles'.[648]

Among the negative criticism responding to Burke's *Reflections* was Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (1791), which viewed the style of the *Reflections* as a 'dramatic performance'.[649] Mark Philp observes that Burke's *Reflections* sold 30,000 copies in the first two years after publication; it elicited over a hundred replies, probably over two hundred in support.[650] Paine's *Rights of Man*, however, sold between 100,000 and 200,000 copies.[651] Philp goes on to describe the novelty of the pamphlet war that ensued after the *Reflections*: 'The innovative character of many works in the debate, their

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[646] L.G. Mitchell, *Charles James Fox*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) p. 113.
[647] *Memorials and correspondence of Charles James Fox*, ed. J. Russell, 4 vols (1853–57), II (30 July 1789), p. 361.
[648] Mitchell, 'Charles James Fox', ODNB, *Ibid.*, also quoting his own *Charles James Fox*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1992) p. 113.
[649] Thomas Paine, *Rights of man: being an answer to Mr. Burke's attack on the French Revolution*, 7th edition, (London: J.S. Jordon, 1791), p. 19.
[650] Philp, p. 5; Gayle Trusdel Pendelton provides a detailed bibliography of this pamphlet war in 'Towards a bibliography of the *Reflections* and *Rights of Man* controversy', *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, 85, (1982), 65–103.
[651] Philp, p. 5.

rhetorical inventiveness and power, their sheer volume and their mass circulation, ensured that the debate, in some for or other, penetrated through British society.'[652] Before Paine, the first bullet fired in the pamphlet war that followed Burke's *Reflections* was Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Men* (1790). Responding to Burke's openness about his theatrical style eliciting tears, she writes: 'Misery, to reach your heart, I perceive, must have its cap and bells; your tears are reserved very naturally considering your character, for the declamation of the theatre […].'[653] Wollstonecraft took particular issue with Burke's depictions of gender, adding that his tears also were reserved for '[…] the down-fall of queens, whose rank alters the nature of folly, and throws a graceful veil over vices that degrade humanity [….]'.[654] Wollstonecraft criticised Burke's 'narrow-minded' perspective that would so heavily value England's Protestant Ascendancy. Wollstonecraft writes of the narrow-mindedness of strong advocacy for the Protestant Right of Ascendancy:

> We should beware of confining all moral excellence to one channel, however capacious; or, if we are narrow-minded, we should not forget how much we owe to chance that our inheritance was not Mahometism; and that the iron hand of destiny, in the shape of deeply rooted authority, has not suspended the sword of destruction over our heads.[655]

What is unfortunate about these early perceptions of Burke as a reactionary servant of Protestant Ascendancy in his *Reflections* (from Fox, Paine, and Wollstonecraft) is the

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[652] *Ibid.,* p. 5.
[653] Mary Wollstonecraft, *A vindication of the rights of men, in a letter to the Right Honourable Edmund Burke; occasioned by his Reflections on the Revolution in France*, 2nd edition, (London: M.DCC.XC, 1790), Eighteenth Century Collections Online, [February 8th, 2011]; Joseph Priestley, *Letters to Edmund Burke Occasioned by His Reflections,* Eighteenth Century Collections Online, [August 3rd, 2012], p. 27.
[654] *Ibid.,* p. 27.
[655] *Ibid.,* p. 37.

narrow perception of it as a Protestant-centred rail against non-Protestant sects. The previous two chapters of this thesis have proven that Burke represented religion in a way that transcended boundaries of denomination and nation—indeed, Burke conveys a relative cultural legitimacy of Christian and non-Christian religions in his writings on India and Ireland: as discussed in the letter to William Burgh, Burke writes that he 'would give a full civil protection […] to Jews, Mahometans and even Pagans […]'; also discussed in his letter to the Reverend John Erskine, he admits that he thinks all religions to be imbued 'with a great deal of human imperfections[…]. I think so of the whole Christian church; having at the same time, that respect for all the other religions, even such as have mere human reason for their origin […]'[656] Burke's *Reflections* presents a more developed version of the same sort of argument that was present in his earlier writings: the more fragmented sacredness becomes in the pursuit of it (e.g. in the disunity of religions, and subversion of churches), the farther away we are from God's will; his argument is about preserving the cultural sacredness, which (as I will now show) Burke represents as entwined with its opposite: the profane.

There is a critical reception of the *Reflections* that receives little attention, but holds interesting implications for this study. Rather than Paine's or Wollstonecraft's response to the *Reflections*, I wish to focus on Thomas Spence's *Pig's Meat* (1794). Derived from Burke's reference in the *Reflections* to 'a swinish multitude', the publication was critical of Burke's hasty generalization of the social classes.[657] Spence's

[656] Burke, *Letter to William Burgh*, in *Correspondence*, II, p. 18; Burke, *Letter to Rev. John Erskine*, in *Correspondence*, II, pp. 270–71.
[657] Thomas Spence, *Pigs' meat; or, lessons for the swinish multitude. Published in weekly penny numbers, collected by the poor man's advocate (an old veteran in the cause of freedom) in the course of his reading for more than twenty years. intended To promote among the Labouring Part of Mankind proper Ideas of*

publication is particularly relevant to this study, because it recognizes Burke's deluge of libellous rhetoric:

> […] surely, it is not to be endured, that any private man is to publish a creed for a whole nation: to tell us that we are not to think for ourselves—to impose his own fetters upon the human mind—to dogmatize at discretion—and that no man shall sit down to answer him without being guilty of a libel!!! I assert, that if it be a libel to mistake our constitution—to support it by means that tend to destroy it—and to choose the most dangerous reason for the interference, Mr. Burke is that libeler […].[658]

Spence indicts Burke for the same offences for which Burke indicts the French *philosophes* and the Revolution Society. According to Spence, it is Burke who is guilty of interfering in constitutional affairs for dangerous reasons. Moreover, Burke is a libeller. This would have been a poignant implication considering that the issue of libel was prevalent in parliamentary debate at the time; its prevalence resulted in Charles James Fox's Libel Act of 1792, which empowered juries to return verdicts in libel cases.[659] This charge also carries special significance coming from Spence, who himself was charged for selling libellous propaganda. To Spence, he was the victim of a double standard; his defence argued: '[…] no one of the opposite party ever offered him the most modest

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their Situation, of their Importance, and of their Rights. And to convince them That their forlorn Condition has not been entirely overlooked and forgotten, nor their just Cause unpleaded, neither by their Maker, nor by the best and most enlightened of Men in all Ages, vol. 2, (London, 1794), Eighteenth Century Collections Online, [February 8th, 2011]; Burke, *Reflections*, p. 130, 'Along with its natural protectors and guardians, learning will be cast into the mire, and trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude.'

[658] *Ibid.*, p. 121.

[659] F. Murray Greenwood, *Legacies of Fear: Law and Politics in Quebec in the Era of the French Revolution*, (Quebec, Canada: Osgoode Soceity, 1993), p. 119.

reproach for selling even Mr Burke's pamphlets'.[660] The record of his trial states: 'Mr. Spence told him in his defence, that he might as well commit every one who sold Gulliver's Travels, More's Utopia, Lock on Government, Pufendorf on the Law of Nature, &c. &c. all of which treated the subject of Government in a manner vastly opposite to the British system.'[661] In short, all of the pamphlets mentioned were outrageous in rhetoric and theme. The particular parallel Spence draws between Burke and Jonathan Swift holds value for this study, inasmuch as it helps to reveal a provocative dimension within Burke's over-exuberant religious rhetoric. Before looking closer at Spence's response, it is important to explain how one could perceive a genuineness in the enthusiasm with which Burke represents themes antithetical to religion—the way in which (as Frans De Bruyn explains) a genuineness about Swift's outrageous proposal to eat the children of the poor was once perceived.

De Bruyn most capably draws the critical parallel between Burke and Swift. De Bruyn observes that Burke's rhetorical 'exertions […] were not unlike the efforts of that other great Irish writer of the eighteenth century, Jonathan Swift […] who bent his formidable literary talents to win ecclesiastical and political preferment […]'.[662] De Bruyn refers to the fact that both have produced misunderstood satire (e.g., Swift's *A Modest Proposal* and Burke's *Vindication*). Swift's work was dangerous to publish, partly because the zeal of his rhetoric risked a perception of genuineness about the

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[660] Thomas Spence, *The case of Thomas Spence, bookseller, the corner of Chancery-Lane, London: who was committed to Clerkenwell prison, on Monday the 10th of December 1792, for selling the second part of Paine's Rights of man: And a Bill of Indictment found against him. To which is added, the affecting case of James Maccurdy, a native of Ireland, Who was committed to Clerkenwell Bridewell, for distributing, certain Seditious Papers, where he died in a few Days*, (London, 1793), [June 2nd, 2011].
[661] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[662] De Bruyn, Frans, *The Literary Genres of Edmund Burke, The Political Uses of Literary Form*, (New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 2.

outrageous subject matters of his satire. Clive Probyn writes: 'Those who printed and disseminated his work (Waters, Harding, Barber, Motte, Faulkner) fully recognized the incendiary nature of his writing and ran very severe risks: arrest and gaol were the common experiences […].'[663] Similarly, the ironic criticism of government in Burke's *Vindication* risked being perceived as genuine. I would further argue that Burke's zeal in constructing his evil diabolid in his *Reflections* (as well as his *Thoughts*, and *Letter to a Member*) warrants the perception of genuine enjoyment out of invoking representations of evil. Burke seems to take pleasure in resurrecting the diabolical as a method of celebrating the sacredness of the established church—e.g. in the above examples of characterizing the Revolutionary Society and the National Assembly as demonic. S.J. Barnett describes a habit of eighteenth-century alarmists to exaggerate the representation of potential threats to Established Religion—for example, atheism or Deism:

> The fears generated by the appearance or reports of atheistic or deistic texts in early modern Europe may well at times have been out of proportion to their number for very good reasons. […] we may include amongst those reasons the scare mongering tactics of apologists, the enjoyment of scandal and the titillation of the forbidden, but also the undoubted and vexing existence of anticlericalism and religious heterodoxy within oral culture.[664]

Barnett further cites the possibility that alarmists enjoyed describing scandal. It is valid, then, to consider Burke in this eighteenth-century context, wherein an opposer of atheism

[663] Clive Probyn, 'Swift, Jonathan (1667–1745)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, [June 2nd, 2011].
[664] Barnett, p. 214.

and evil not only (ironically) relies on those very themes, but is also titillated by engaging with them. Consider Burke's description of the restraining power of the *ancien régime* in France as protective:

> Abstractedly speaking, government, as well as liberty, is good; yet could I, in common sense, ten years ago, have felicitated France on her enjoyment of a government (for she then had a government) without enquiry what the nature of that government was, or how it was administered? Can I now congratulate the same nation upon its freedom? Is it because liberty in the abstract may be classed among the blessings of mankind, that I am seriously to felicitate a madman, who has escaped from the protecting restraint and wholesome darkness of his cell, on his restoration to the enjoyment of light and liberty? Am I to congratulate an highway man and murderer, who has broke prison, upon the recovery of his natural rights?[665]

The first rhetorical device Burke uses in this passage is the aside, which insinuates that France at one time had a government, and now has none. Burke constructs a metaphor in which the new method of governance in France is like a newly escaped madman, or murderer. Further, he juxtaposes the light and liberty associated with the new regime in France against the darkness of the old government. The darkness is not oppressive; instead, he describes it as 'wholesome'. I argue that this exemplifies the way Burke renders dark, irreligious, profane themes as sacred.

Spence must have appreciated the diabolical shadow underneath Burke's rhetoric, which supports Barrell's observation (above) that eighteenth-century alarmists gave a

[665] Burke, *Reflections*, *Writings*, VIII, p. 58.

voice to themes antithetical to what they were defending. The caricature of Burke depicted by Spence, below, is decidedly dark. The following is a verse from a song included in the publication that mocks Burke's rhetorical style:

> Let Burke, like a bat, from his splendour retire,
> A splendour too strong for his eyes;
> Let pedants, and fools, his effusions admire,
> Intrap in his cobwebs like flies.
> Shall phrenzy and sophistry hope to prevail,
> Where reason opposes her weight;
> When the welfare of millions is hung on the scale,
> And the balance yet trembles with fate?[666]

The simile of 'Burke, like a bat' invokes rather sinister imagery of a creature that dwells in dark places. In the Bible, bats are included among the creatures to which the evil idols will be cast, in Isaiah 2:20.[667] This biblical interpretation understands bats as keepers of evil (or evil deeds, such as idolatry). Thus, the characterization of Burke as a harbinger of evil—according to *Pig's Meat*—is apparent. Referring to Burke's words as effusive refers to their extravagant, gushing style. The metaphor of Burke's words entrapping fools, in the way that a web traps a fly, insinuates that his arguments are deceptive. The praise of sophistry in the song (while it could be a facetious response to Burke's paranoia) touches on Burke's very real concern about the frenzy resultant from factions who would govern according to sophistry. In fact, Spence specifically mocked Burke's

[666] Spence, *Pigs' meat.* p. 82.
[667] Isaiah, 2:20, 'In that day men will cast away to the moles and the bats Their idols of silver and their idols of gold, Which they made for themselves to worship […]'.

sense of entitlement with regard to the social criticism of factions: 'But Mr. Burke thought it was reserved for his eloquence to whip these curs of faction to their kennel.'[668] Spence depicts a sanctimonious Burke, self-ordained in a mission to stave off rebellious factions (portrayed as dogs), through his rhetorical eloquence.

The early image of Burke as a reactionary crusader (as seen in Spence, Fox, Wollstonecraft, and Paine) is still seen in contemporary criticism of Burke: Eagleton uses the saccharine language of Burke's Marie Antoinette passage in the *Reflections* to interpret a non-progressive, reactionary Burke, and demonstrate how 'the aesthetic in Britain is effectively captured by the political right'.[669] This criticism contributes to depictions of Burke as a reactionary caricature. However, as we have seen, Bourke argues an appreciation for the sense of urgency Burke felt at the time, which justifies the enthusiasm of Burke's rhetoric. Luke Gibbons and Albert Q. Hirshman's look at the *Reflections* in a tradition of 'reactionary rhetoric'.[670] Hirshman's study of reactionary rhetoric submits a 'perversity thesis': Hirshman argues that Burke understood that the theoretically 'good' intentions of the French revolutionaries would revert (or pervert) to 'evil'.[671] In other words, Hirshman writes that Burke pointed out the perversity thesis in the revolution; Burke understood that 'grand schemes to advance the cause of progress and liberty often relapse into the very barbarism they set out to eliminate'.[672] I would argue, however, that Burke, in fact, displays this paradoxical function of progress, when

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[668] Spence, pp. 121, 122.
[669] Eagleton, *Ideology of the Aesthetic*, p. 60.
[670] Gibbons, p. 10.
[671] Albert O. Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, Jeapordy*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 15.
[672] Gibbons, p. 10; Gibbons chiefly discusses the perversity thesis in terms of Burke falling victim to it when his Irish writings are perverted 'by ideologues in the British Treasury to justify the iron laws of economic rationality that presided over the catastrophe of the Great Irish Famine', Gibbons, p. 12.

he constructs arguments using the very elements he seeks to eliminate; he argues for the preservation of the sacred by exalting profane themes, such as the demonic. This, as we know from Barrell, is characteristic of eighteenth-century alarmism.

However, I do not agree with Hirschman in his opinion that Burke's recognition of the perversity thesis represents 'a radical ideological shift'.[673] The issue of Burke's perceived political shift, or lack of consistency, when confronting the issues in France is extensively addressed; Eagleton, Francis O'Gorman, Christopher Reid are also among the scholars who read a political shift, evidencing a reactionary Burke, in his *Reflections*.[674] No one takes the view that I offer in this chapter, that the *Reflections* evidences a consistency for Burke—in his religious thinking. Much of what fuels the perception of this political shift comes from his 'support' for the American Revolution versus his opposition to the French Revolution. However, as discussed in the last chapter, his respective positions of conciliation with America (e.g., repealing the tax on tea) was about preserving and fortifying the empire—retaining at least a trading relationship with America.[675] The *Reflections* also is about preserving the empire from the diffusion of destructive thinking. Another source of Burke's perceived political shift also comes from his early response regarding early action in France. In July 1789, Burke writes to the Earl of Charlemont:

> As to use here our thoughts of every thing at home are suspended, by our astonishment at the wonderful Spectacle which is exhibited in a

[673] Hirschman, p. 15.
[674] Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 35; O'Gorman, p. 139; Reid, p. 24; Fidler and Welsch, p. 29; etc.
[675] He was critical of Britain's method of robbing one part of the empire to try to fund another: 'It is through the American trade of Tea that your East India conquests are to be prevented from crushing you with their burthen.' Burke, *Taxation*, p. 425.

> Neighbouring and rival Country—what Spectators, and what actors! England gazing with astonishment at a French struggle for Liberty and not knowing whether to blame or applaud![676]

I agree with Welsch and Fidler, who observe, 'Even in these early days, however, we find the seeds of worry and doubt about the nature of the political upheaval in France […]'; above, Burke does not know yet how to respond to the spectacle.[677] I do not believe that Burke's *Reflections* evinces inconsistency. I wish to show (in the excerpts from the *Reflections* to follow) that Burke values change and adaptability, which is antithetical to reactionary conservatism, and therefore, offers a counterbalance to such interpretations. Further, I believe that Burke's *Reflections* demonstrates a consistency by: first, showing the same openness to expansion that he showed in his writings on India and Ireland; second, by showing that his writing represents religion in a way that engages with themes antithetical to it—as he did in his earlier writings (the *Vindication* and the *Enquiry*). For example, I will show how, in the *Reflections*, Burke treats the 'sacred' along with the 'profane' with equal permanency, which is similar to how he conceptualized the 'awe' drawn from 'sacred' and 'profane' sources with equal legitimacy in his *Enquiry*: in Chapter 1 of this thesis, I argued that Burke suggests that awe drawn from a Christian or holy text is the same sort of awe drawn from non-Christian (as he writes 'profane') texts. The sacred and profane are represented in a 'general sentiment' of 'awe'.[678]

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[676] *Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, Copeland, VI, p. 10.
[677] Welsh and Fidler, p. 29.
[678] O'Connell, p. 104; 'An heathan poet has a sentiment of a similar nature. […] It were endless to enumerate all the passages both in the sacred and profane writers, which establish the general sentiment of mankind, concerning the inseparable union of a sacred and reverential awe, with our ideas of the divinity.' Burke, *Enquiry*, in *Writings*, I, p. 240.

In a way, Burke's *Reflections* addresses the issue of consistency outright. Burke explains the adaptability of human concerns, the variety of changes it undergoes:

> Indeed, in the gross and complicated mass of human passions and concerns, the primitive rights of men undergo such a variety of refractions and reflections that it becomes absurd to talk of them as if they continued in the simplicity of their original direction.[679]

In other words, it would be absurd to hold one's mind to its original direction; change is inevitable, and adaptability is necessary for conservation. Burke's value of a constitution that makes provision for change is the strongest argument against a reactionary interpretation of the *Reflections*: if an opposition to change is reactionary, then Burke's advocacy for a constitutional capacity for change in his *Reflections* is progressive. Further, Burke's advocacy for this capacity for change is seen in the way he represents religion:

> It is far from impossible to reconcile, if we do not suffer ourselves to be tangled in the mazes of metaphysic sophistry, the use of both of a fixed rule and an occasional deviation; the sacredness of an hereditary principle of succession in our government, with a power of change in its application in cases of extreme emergency. Even in that extremity (if we take the measure of our rights by our exercise of them at the Revolution) the change is to be confined to the peccant part only; to the part which produced the necessary deviation; and even then it is to be effected without a decomposition of the whole civil political mass, for the purpose

[679] Burke, *Reflections*, *Writings*, VIII, p. 112.

> of originating a new civil order out of the first elements of society. A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation.[680]

Above, Burke explains that even the sacredness of Britain's hereditary principle of Protestant succession is evidence of innovation and change; even the religious principle, upon which a state stands, needs the capacity for change, as a means of conservation. He contrasts this provision for necessary reform with the unnecessary upheaval he accuses the Revolutionary Society of supporting (the overthrowing of Charles I in the revolution of 1649): earlier in his argument, Burke explained that the Declaration of Right did not make 'any provision for legalizing the crown on the spurious revolution principles of the Old Jewry […].'[681] He trumpets the Declaration as '[…] the cornerstone of our constitution, as reinforced, explained, improved, and in its fundamental principles for ever settled'.[682] He later continues by defending the Declaration of Right (under William III and Mary II in 1689):

> The law by which this royal family is specifically destined to the succession, is the act of the 12th and 13th of King William. The terms of this act bind "us and our heirs, and our posterity, to them, their heirs, and their posterity," being Protestants, to the end of time, in the same words as the declaration of right had bound us to the heirs of King William and Queen Mary.[683]

I argue that we can extend Burke's value of change (as a necessity for conservation) to

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[680] *Ibid.*, p. 72
[681] *Ibid.*, p. 67.
[682] *Ibid.*, p. 67.
[683] *Ibid.*, p. 74.

the way in which Burke represents religion in his writings. Moreover, his argument for constitutional capacity for change contradicts interpretations of Burke as a reactionary against change.

Burke views the reckless upheaval of religious establishment as a decline to atheism; below, he writes that it is not the English nature to do away with religious tenets, should they seem no longer appropriate.

> If our religious tenets should ever want a further elucidation, we shall not call on atheism to explain them […].
>
> We know, and it is our pride to know, that man is by his constitution a religious animal; that atheism is against, not only our reason, but our instincts; and that it cannot prevail long.[684]

We can understand this excerpt above as contributing to Burke's conceptualization of religion's capacity for adaptation: if religious tenets are 'wanting' elucidation, the English do not abandon religiousness altogether (like the French National Assembly), they evolve the way in which religious tenets are conceptualized.

Burke understands that the capacity for change means the need for a system of checks and balances (a system that includes the rights of non-gentry people, which can be interpreted as progressive). Referring to the seemingly anarchic efforts of the French National Assembly, Burke asks:

> Have they never heard of a monarchy directed by laws, controlled and balanced by the great hereditary wealth and hereditary dignity of a nation;

[684] *Ibid.*, p. 141–42.

> and both again controlled by a judicious check from the reason and feeling of the people at large acting by a suitable permanent organ?[685]

Burke opposes change enforced without regard to the populace: monarchical right of descent checked by civil law, and the aristocracy checked by the reason and feeling of the people. The inclusion of such checks as a provision against despotism is not blindly traditional. In fact, we can place the recognition of the public at the forefront of Enlightenment. S.J. Barnett explains that, while theorists of modernity ignore the fact that the recognition of a public sphere was a slow evolution, he concedes that, as a concept, it is not wholly invalid to attribute a large part of this evolution to the Enlightenment.[686]

> The post-1715 public sphere in France, like its earlier manifestation in England, was brought into being by politico-religious struggle. In both countries that sphere quickly broadened, stretching beyond the nascent bourgeoisie and its salons to those who read newspapers, frequented coffee houses and became interested in current religious, social and political issues.[687]

We can then view Burke's inclusive thinking about a public sphere as participating in this slow evolution of modernity.

Like Burke, Price praises the constitutional provision for change and (respective) religious freedom. Price boasts over the constitutional result of the Glorious Revolution of 1688; however, he does so in a manner that celebrates the overthrowing of King James:

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[685] *Ibid.*, p. 173.
[686] Barnett, p. 207.
[687] *Ibid.*, p. 209.

> But he was a fool as well as a bigot. He wanted courage as well as prudence; and therefore, fled and left us to settle quietly for ourselves that constitution of government which is now our boast. We have particular reason, as Protestant Dissenters, to rejoice on this occasion. It was at this time we were rescued from persecution, and obtained the liberty of worshipping God in the manner we think most acceptable to him. It was then our meeting houses were opened, our worship was taken under the protection of the law, and the principles of toleration gained a triumph.[688]

For Burke, the overthrowing of established governments carries the potential for a rebellious force to evolve into a despotic force; the National Assembly exemplifies this particular evolution into tyranny. The seemingly unrestrained power of the National Assembly to overthrow established governance exemplifies the greatest moral evil conceivable: he differentiates the 'drop' of power inherent within the House of Commons from the dangerous amount—the 'ocean'—of power given to the members of the National Assembly: 'They have a power given to them, like that of the evil principle, to subvert and destroy, but none to construct, except such machines as may be fitted for further subversion and further destruction.'[689] Below, Burke views the denial of real social circumstances for the sake of abstract, metaphysical, ideals as selfish, and therefore oligarchic:

> All these considerations leave no doubt on my mind, that if this monster of a constitution can continue, France will be wholly governed by the agitators in corporations, by societies in the towns formed of directors of

[688] Price, *A discourse on the love of our country*, p. 33.
[689] *Ibid.*, pp. 96, 119.

> *assignats*, and trustees for the sale of church lands, attornies, agents, money-jobbers, speculators, and adventurers, composing an ignoble oligarchy, founded on the destruction of the crown, the church, the nobility, and the people.[690]

Burke takes issue with the composition of the National Assembly, and their confiscation procedures as a method of raising funds for the State: a government comprised of unqualified persons prepared to destroy the established system—in which monarchy, church, and nobility are intertwined—is an ignoble oligarchy.

The characterisation of the National Assembly's composition as evil is an escalation of the conceivable libel Burke commits earlier in the *Reflections*:

> This unforced choice, this fond election of evil, would appear perfectly unaccountable, if we did not consider the composition of the National Assembly […]. Judge, Sir, of my surprise, when I found that a very great proportion of the Assembly (a majority, I believe, of the members who attended) was to be composed of practitioners in the law. It was composed not of distinguished magistrates, who had given pledges to their country of their science, prudence, and integrity; not of leading advocates, the glory of the bar; not of renowned professors in universities;—but for the far greater part, as it must in such a number, of the inferior unlearned, mechanical, merely instrumental members of the profession.[691]

Most obviously, Burke refers to the method by which the members of the Assembly were selected as evil; which helps to construct the diabolid in which the National Assembly is

[690] *Ibid.,* p. 174.
[691] *Ibid.,* p. 91

included. Burke expresses surprise at the Assembly's composition: not being made of unbiased judges, but by 'inferior unlearned' practitioners of law. He later refers to the composition as 'an handful of country clowns who have seats in that Assembly, some of whom are said not to be able to read and write?'[692] Burke further refers to the composition of the Assembly when he writes: 'If all the absurd theories of lawyers and divines were to vitiate the objects in which they are conversant, we should have no law and no religion left in the world.'[693] I focus on the latter object under threat of vitiation: according to Burke, if governance were left to the likes of the Assembly, there would be no religion in the world. Contrary to what Clark argues, the vitiation of established religion (sacrilege) is a chief concern for Burke in his *Reflections*. Burke worries about the vitiation of the established religion (the Roman Catholic foundation); yet (paradoxically) defends it by engaging with irreligious themes. While we can situate this form of Burke's representation of religion in the eighteenth-century habits described by Barnett and Barrell above, I argue that it also is articulated in the conceptualizations surrounding religion that are in twentieth-century theories of modernity.

Burke's resonance with the irreligiousness of 20th century modernity

As Marshall Berman outlines, the second phase of modernity includes the French Revolution in an age of revolution during the 1790s: 'an age that generates explosive upheavals in every dimension of personal, social and political life'.[694] I believe we can read an explosive upheaval in the conceptual dimension of religion in Burke's responses to France—the upheaval of boundaries between Protestant and Catholic, Christian and

[692] *Ibid.*, p. 94.
[693] *Ibid.*, p. 77.
[694] Marshall Berman, p. 17.

heterodox, and even between holy and profane. I argue that Burke's exaltation of dark and demonic themes resonates with one figure of modernity with which Berman engages. Berman looks to Goethe's Faust to encapsulate the 'modern man's' desire to transform and improve himself. He defines the meaning of Faust's relationship with the devil: 'human powers can be developed only through what Marx called, "the powers of the underworld", dark and fearful energies that may erupt with a horrible force beyond all human control.'[695] In a way, we can conceive of Burke reckoning the sacredness of religious establishment by engaging with 'dark and fearful energies'. I believe Berman is referring to the passage in Marx's and Engels' *Manifesto*, which reads:

> Modern bourgeois society, with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells.[696]

The metaphor suggests an advancement of modernity, wherein its inventions become uncontrollable. Berman, among others, sees the resonance of this imagery in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein monster: the creation (the monster) becomes uncontrollable.[697] Above, Burke issues a similar warning, that the National Assembly will lose control over the monster they have created; the new government eventually does revert to the Reign of Terror. This is what Hirschman means by Burke applying the perversity thesis to the

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[695] *Ibid.*, p. 40.
[696] Marx and Engels, *Manifesto*, p. 10.
[697] Marshall Berman, p. 101; Michael R. Page, *Literary Imagination from Erasmus Darwin to H.G. Wells, Science, Evolution, and Ecology*, (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2012), p. 75; Chris Baldick, *In Frankenstein's Shadow: Myth, Monstrosity, and Nineteenth-century Writing*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 3.

French Revolution[698] However, I would argue that Burke does not only indicate the perversion in the intentions underlying the French Revolution; indeed, Burke himself fulfils the perversity thesis, by making his arguments reliant on the very themes he opposes (dark and fearful themes); he is, in a way, complicit in the evil he denounces. While Burke, in his writings concerning France, positions himself against atheism (for example, as discussed above in his opposition to repealing the Test and Corporation Acts), he is reliant on atheism to shape his argument(s) (as discussed above, when he makes French thinking synonymous with atheism). Like Berman's description of Faust, Burke engages with 'dark and fearful energies'; he does so in such an enthusiastic way, that conceivably give too much power to the demonic—perhaps losing some control of his demonic dimension.[699]

In another sense, I argue that we can construe the division of religious sects as an invention (or monster) that—by the revolutionary age—has become out of control. The way in which Burke conceptualizes religion above shows us that the fragmentation of religions (particular to the French Revolution) is out of control—we have seen how Burke admonishes the bigoted robbery between sects (for example, the confiscation of the French Church); we have seen Burke point to this problem in groups of dissenters (for example, Price and the Revolutionary Society). This does not evince Burke's opposition to embracing differing or reforming sects; I believe it does evince Burke's worry about the disorder brought about by disunity.

Berman examines the following excerpt from Marx's and Engels's *Communist Manifesto*:

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[698] Hirschman, p. 15.
[699] Marshall Berman, p. 40.

> Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real condition of life and his relations with his kind.[700]

Berman explains:

> Marx's second clause, which proclaims the destruction of everything holy, is more complex and more interesting than the standard nineteenth-century materialist assertion that God does not exist. Marx is moving in the dimension of time, working to evoke an ongoing historical drama and trauma. He is saying that the aura of holiness is suddenly missing, and that we cannot understand ourselves in the present until we confront what is absent.[701]

Zygmunt Bauman also examines this passage when writing about 'the intention' of the 'modern spirit': 'That intention called in turn for the "profaning of the sacred".'[702] Berman's analysis of Marx's passage provides the framework for understanding Burke's representation of religion in his writings about France. Consider the definition of 'profane': 'Not relating or devoted to what is sacred or biblical', unconsecrated, secular,

[700] Marx and Engels, *Manifesto*, p. 8.
[701] Marshall Berman, p. 89.
[702] Bauman, p. 3.

lay, civil, as distinguished from ecclesiastical […] Freq. contrasted with sacred'.[703] I argue that Burke's responses to the French Revolution to preserve sacredness rely on the profane; in a way, he conceptualizes the holy and the profane in relative legitimacy—just as he did in his *Enquiry*, when he explained that awe is sourced from both the holy and the profane.[704] To use Berman's phrasing, the 'aura of holiness' surrounding Burke's representation of religion in the excerpts above is subverted (or rendered 'missing') by his reliance on the profane.

Perhaps also, the way in which Burke represents religious sectarianism as a human conception subverts the holiness of religion. Elsewhere, we can see that Burke understands the conceptual nature of other forms of social order, for example, legal authority. In his *Fourth Letter on a Regicide Peace* (1795), Burke writes 'we ought to know that the spirit of our Laws, or that of our own dispositions, which are stronger than Laws are susceptible of all those defensive measures which the occasion may require.'[705] Like Hume, Burke views laws as stemming from conceptual manners, shared in aesthetic experience.[706] In short, Burke understands that the concept of the law is stronger than the actual law. Eagleton captures the conceptual source of legal authority for Burke: 'Authority, in short, is a kind of fiction we collaboratively sustain; and though […] there is a sense for him [Burke] in which all political sovereignty depends on a willing

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[703] OED, 'profane', *ibid*.
[704] O'Connell, p. 104; 'An heathan poet has a sentiment of a similar nature. […] It were endless to enumerate all the passages both in the sacred and profane writers, which establish the general sentiment of mankind, concerning the inseparable union of a sacred and reverential awe, with our ideas of the divinity.' Burke, *Enquiry*, in *Writings*, I, p. 240.
[705] Edmund Burke, *Fourth Letter on a Regicide Peace, To the Earl Fitzwilliam* (1795 / 97), in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, Part I: The Revolutionary War, 1794-1797, Part II: Ireland, 1794-1797*, ed. by Paul Langford, R.B. McDowell, and William B. Todd, 9 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), vol. ix, pp. 44–118, (p. 110).
[706] David Hume, *Morals*, p. 211.

suspension of disbelief.'[707] Darren Howard makes a similar observation: for Burke, '[t]he greatest threat posed by the French Revolution is […] the threat it poses to the necessary fictions that uphold society'.[708] I argue that we can extend this analysis of Burke's thinking on legal authority to his representation of religion; he also understands the sectarianism of religion to be conceptual in nature, as constructed by humans. It follows then that Burke represents religion as a 'kind of fiction'—a fiction, inasmuch as the differentiation between religious sects, nation, holy and profane is conceptual, or 'something that is invented'.[709]

Eagleton elaborates on Burke's representation of political power as conceptual, constructed by humans:

> [T]here is something alarmingly anti-foundational about the notion that power rests upon nothing but consent, opinion and affection, as though in some Berkeleyan fantasy it would vanish if we were all to close our eyes.[710]

I argue that this is not just the way Burke thinks about legal authority, or political power, but also the way he represents religion: when consented upon qualities that separate different sects were rendered familiar, this deconstructs the conceptual foundations of religion(s). Twentieth-century theorists of modernity have terminology to describe this

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[707] Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 39; Bullard also refers to the conceptual source of laws, p. 17.
[708] Howard, Darren, 'Necessary Fictions: the "Swinish Multitude" and The Rights of Man', *Studies in Romanticism*, 47 (2008), 161–78 (p. 169).
[709] 'something that is invented *or* untrue', Oxford English Dictionary, 'fiction', <http://www.oed.com/>, [August 3rd, 2012]. This is not to say that religion, for Burke, fulfils the latter definition of fiction—being 'untrue'. I do not believe this is necessarily the case, but am not here prepared to engage with concepts of 'truth', or 'untruths'; I make reference here only to fiction as a thing 'invented' or fabricated.
[710] Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 39; Eagleton writes that Irish thinking about political authority 'privileges the conative over the cognitive, rhetoric over representation.', *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 51.

kind of representation of religion: deconstructionist interpretations of religion offer 'a version of negative-theology' akin to the irreligion that Burke conceptualizes symbiotically with religion in his writings above.[711] Jacques Derrida, said: 'For me, there is no such thing as "religion". Within what one calls religions—Judaism, Christianity, Islam, or other religions—there are again tensions, heterogeneity, disruptive volcanoes […]'.[712] For Burke, things like revolution disrupt conceptual heterogeneity (to use Derrida's term) between differing sects: tolerant dissenters revert to intolerant bigots; religion exists symbiotically with irreligion. Michel Foucault writes:

> It is not that religion is delusional by nature […] But religious delusion is a function of the secularization of culture: religion may be the object of delusional belief insofar as the culture of a group no longer permits the assimilation of religious or mystical beliefs in the present context of experience.[713]

We can conceive of Burke preserving pleasing religious delusions in response to the secularization of French culture. If we follow Foucault's assessment above, we can assert that the way Burke represents religion is a function of secularizing modernity. However, rather like Derrida's conceptualization of religion, the division between sects, for Burke, is conceptual only, or constructed by humankind only; so, one could conceivably assert (as Derrida does above) that there is 'no such thing as religion'. James W. Bernauer writes that Michel 'Foucault's negative theology is a subversion of that faith […] which

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[711] Jonathan D. Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism*, (USA: Cornall University Press, 1982), preface, 2007.
[712] Derrida, *Deconstruction*, p. 21.
[713] Foucault, *Mental Illness*, p. 81; see also Michel Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, ed. by Jeremy R. Carrette, (UK: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. viii.

religions call God'.[714] Burke subverts God-centred faith by representing profane awe (not sourced from a deity); he further subverts the holiness of established Christianity by relying upon (and perhaps, even enjoying) themes of evil and themes of irreligion. In this way, we can articulate Burke's representation of religion in his *Reflections*, his *Letter to a Member*, and *Thoughts on French Affairs* using terminology from Derrida and Foucault—negative theology, or religion without religion.

Conclusion to Chapter 3

Writing on Burke's political thought, Hampshire-Monk observes that scholarship ignores the 'conceptual content of the rhetorical tradition' within which Burke operates.[715] While I do not seat these writings in their political tradition, I believe I fill a need related to the one Hampshire-Monk highlights: to understand the conceptual content of Burke's critical treatment of religion in his writings on France. I believe I have proven the value of wondering (like Crowe, Lock, Hitchens) beyond Burke's own religious identity.[716] By arguing that Burke's representations of religion transcend boundaries between differing sects, I have countered interpretations (from Lock and Clark) that argue an isolated interpretation of Burke's thinking—that we should only appreciate Burke as a Christian, not as a co-religionist.[717] I have shown that Burke's representation of Protestant and non-Protestant sects as legitimate (with relativity to their culture) is the commentary of a co-religionist—if we interpret that term in a way that denotes the co-habitation of different religious sects.

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[714] James W. Bernauer, *Michel Foucault's Force of Flight: Toward an Ethics for Thought*, (New Jersey: Humanities Press International, 1990), p. 178–79.
[715] Ian Hampshire-Monk, 'Rhetoric and Opinion in the Politics of Edmund Burke', *History of Political Thought*, 3, (1988), 455–84, (p. 461).
[716] Crowe, p. 52; Lock, p. 36; Hitchens, p.133.
[717] Lock, p. 36; Clark, p. 26.

I have argued against interpretations of Burke as a 'reactionary prophet' (from Hitchens, Burrows, O'Brien Eagleton, White, Canavan, Frohnen, and Gibbons,) in the following ways: first, by demonstrating how he emerges as an advocate for expanded religious freedom; second, by demonstrating that his advocacy for the constitutional capacity for change (exemplified in the implementation of Protestant ascendancy) does not denote an anti-modern opposition to change.[718] I have also argued that Burke's representation of religion in his writings on France enjoy a dimension in which religiousness, or holiness, shares a relative importance with irreligiousness, or the profane. I have demonstrated how Burke's exaltation of dark, demonic themes resonates with the paradoxical conditions in modernity described by Marx, Berman, and Bauman.[719] I have argued that presence of irreligion, or non-religion, in Burke's writings concerning France offers a rather deconstructionist representation of religion, which prefigures twentieth-century thinking (from Derrida and Foucault). Ultimately, I believe I have presented a critical interpretation of Burke's writings concerning the French Revolution that offsets reactionary, anti-modern analyses, evident in the way religion is represented in his literature. I believe I have proven that (just as in his early writings and his writings on India and Ireland) religion, in Burke's writings on France, is thought of as a thing that is conceptual, well disposed to change, and receptive to progress.

In this third chapter of my thesis, as well as the first two, I have demonstrated how Burke's representation of religions blends religious and non-religious design (Christian and non-Christian, Protestant and non-Protestant, holy and profane). In the last

[718] Hitchens, p. 133; Burrows, p. 37; O'Brien, 'Ireland, Circumstances, Anti-communism', p. 178; Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 42; White, p. 83; ; Canavan, p. 163; Frohnen, p. 9; Gibbons, p. 10; etc.
[719] Marx and Engels, *Manifesto*, p. 8; Marshall Berman, p. 89; Bauman, p. 3.

chapter of my thesis, I will examine Burke's representation of global religious culture as contributing to the modern conceptualization of religion. Further, I will examine how Burke's religious thinking figures with his view of science overall in his late writings.

Ch. 4: 'Burke and science: His *Letter to a Noble Lord* and *Letters on a Regicide Peace*'

Introduction to Chapter 4

The fourth and final chapter of my thesis is an examination of the very late writings in Burke's life: his *Letter to a Noble Lord* (1796) and his *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1796, 1797). In these texts, I focus on Burke's encounter with science in the Enlightenment age; moreover, I intend to reveal how Burke's encounter with science reflects his representation of religion. In his *Letter to a Noble Lord*, and also his *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, Burke uses differing branches of science as a metaphor for criticizing an advancing movement of experimental thinking, which threatens to vitiate ossified religious concepts and institutions.[720] In Burke's time, 'science' simply referred to 'any department of learning'; his references to departments (or categories) of medicine, chemistry, and also astronomy and physiology warrant thinking about his treatment of these departments as encounters with 'science'.[721]

Simon Schaffer has expertly analysed some of Burke's confrontation with science in his *Letter to a Noble Lord*—as part of a wider focus about the theme of 'genius' in the Enlightenment.[722] I believe I can complement Schaffer's work by extending analysis

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[720] Edmund Burke, *Letter to a Noble Lord* (1796), in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke, Part I: The Revolutionary War, 1794-1797, Part II: Ireland, 1794-1797*, ed. by Paul Langford, R.B. McDowell, and William B. Todd, 9 vols, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), IX, pp. 145–86; As cited above: *First letter on a Regicide Peace*, pp. 187–263*; Second Letter on a Regicide Peace,* pp. 264–95; *Third Letter on a Regicide Peace*, pp. 296–388*;* and *Fourth Letter on a Regicide Peace,* pp. 44–118.

[721] 'Knowledge acquired by study; acquaintance with or master of any department of learning', Oxford English Dictionary, 'science' <http://www.oed.com/>, [November 11th, 2012].

[722] Simon Schaffer, 'Genius in Romantic Natural Philosophy', in *Romanticism and the Sciences*, ed. by Andrew Cunningham and Nicholas Jardine, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1990), pp. 82–98; Simon Schaffer, 'States of Mind: Enlightenment and Natural Philosophy', in *The Languages of Psyche: Mind and Body in Enlightenment Thought*, ed. G. S. Rousseau, (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), pp. 233–90.

about Burke and science to his *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, by offering more background on the context of Burke's references to science, and offering insight about what these references reveal about the way religion is represented in Burke's writings. More importantly, I believe I can offer an interpretation of these texts that does not emphasise Burke as a reactionary servant of the *ancien regime*. Schaffer writes of Burke's opposition to differing branches of the sciences of natural philosophy as linked with the subversive thinking of the French Revolution:

> Burke and his admirers held that there were bands of self-styled enlightened philosophers whose sinister associations masked silent plots to subvert established order […] Astrology, mesmerism, alchemy, the Eleusinian mysteries, electrotherapy and prophecy all became linked to the radical cause.[723]

Schaffer's work is a study with a wider focus on the particular eighteenth-century appetite for genius; he interprets Burke's 'conservative commentary' about the French Revolution in a list of 'learned servants of the *ancien régime*' (including Goethe and Justus Moser) who feared the pursuit of genius as an epidemic.[724] The 'conservative commentary' to which Schaffer refers is, indeed, Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord*; however, I argue that evincing Burke as a 'servant of the *ancien régime*' in this text is a very narrow interpretation. Joseph Pappin also offers an interpretation of Burke as a Conservative, in his work on Burke and metaphysics: 'Burke's convictions about the

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[723] Schaffer, 'Genius', p. 87.
[724] *Ibid.*, p. 82; H.A.M. Snelders also writes about the fascination over genius in the Romantic era, including the fascination that scientists of the Romantic era had with alchemy in ''Romanticism and "Naturphilosophie" and the Inorganic Natural Sciences, 1797-1840: An Introductory Survey', *Studies in Romanticism*, 9 (1970), 193–215.

nature of man and his relation to God conditions his politics, which are, of course, conservative.'[725] I wish to put forward an interpretation of Burke that emphasises his conservatism less by demonstrating how his value of progressive notions, like multicultural acceptance, are key to the representation of religion in his writings.

First, I grapple with the problems inherent in placing Burke in a scientific context. Second, I focus on Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord*; I delve into the context of Burke's application of various scientific metaphors. I observe how Burke's references align him with classical scientific pathology, against the new sect of experimenters who perpetuate thinking that is destructive to religious establishment.

Then, I argue that the way in which Burke criticizes an emerging culture of scientific experimenters (in the same text, as well as his *Letters on a Regicide Peace*) reveals a conception of religion that resonates with twenty-first century theorists of modernity. In particular, Mark. C. Taylor interprets religion in modernity through an early branch of science: alchemy. Taylor writes that alchemy 'burns away polluting differences and returns the many to the one in which they all originate'.[726] Historically, as a precursor to the science of chemistry, alchemy is 'the branch of study and practical craft in the medieval and early renaissance period concerned with the nature and transformation of physical substances […]'; figuratively, alchemy can mean: 'to treat, produce, or transform by (or as if by) alchemy […]'.[727] However, more importantly for understanding Burke's thinking concerning religion when he encounters science, alchemy

[725] Pappin, p. 28.
[726] Taylor, 'Terminal Faith', p. 39, 40.
[727] '[…] the transmutation of baser metals into gold; the physical and chemical transformation of metals and other substances performed by practitioners of this craft', Oxford English Dictionary, 'alchemy' <http://www.oed.com/>, [September 1st, 2012].

(like Taylor's description, which refers to religion in modernity) finds or renders a common element from differing elements. I will demonstrate the way in which Burke's representation of religion resonates with such modern theories about religion—for example, we will see Burke refer to the strength in an 'aggregate' of faiths: 'At bottom, these are all the same' all 'derived from the same sources'.[728]

I then explain the way in which his *Letters on a Regicide Peace* do not communicate an opposition to science, but rather an opposition to the sort of thinking that disavows repercussions in humanity, for the sake of experiment—the misuse of scientific thinking. Finally, I demonstrate how we can think of Burke as conceptually contributing to what modern theorists of religion understand as trans-national religion, or a universal religiosity.[729]

Most readings of Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord* treat Burke strictly as a politician or a rhetorician, for example, the interpretations from J.T. Boulton and Stephen H. Browne. Browne observes that it is owing to Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord* that scholarship of Burke is a 'bifurcation, in which Burke is appropriated as a philosopher of politics or as a rhetorician of expedience'.[730] Browne, chooses the latter classification of Burke when looking at *Letter to a Noble Lord,* in terms of its importance to the 'study of public address'.[731] Boulton treats Burke in the former classification (as a political philosopher), observing how Burke's rhetoric links the Duke of Bedford with wider

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[728] Burke, *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*, *Writings*, IX, p. 248.
[729] As we will see from Hoeber Rudolph's, 'Introduction Religion, States', pp. 1–26, and Hoeber Rudolph's, 'Religious Concomitants of Transnationalism', pp. 139–53.
[730] Stephen H. Browne, 'Edmund Burke's Letter to a Noble Lord: A textual Study in Political Philosophy and Rhetorical Action', *Communication Monographs*, 55 (1988), 215–29 (p. 215); Browne makes a similar study of the same text in his *Edmund Burke and the Discourse of Virtue*, (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1993).
[731] Browne, p. 215.

political 'ideas of destruction, tyranny, and rapacity; and these ideas are indelibly linked with the revolutionaries to whose philosophy he subscribed. Language and imagery identify the man [the Duke of Bedford] with the group [the French revolutionaries]'.[732] Rather than follow this bifurcation (appropriating Burke as a rhetorician or a political thinker), I wish to interpret Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord* along with his *Letters on a Regicide Peace* to examine his confrontation with science in order to appropriate him as a quasi-religious thinker. My reading of these texts fills the need to understand Burke represents religion in these late texts; further, to understand how his treatment of science in these texts is linked with, or revealing of, his thinking surrounding religion.

I believe that a conversation about Burke and science (and what that reflects about his critical representation of religion) should include Burke's relationship with metaphysics: the 'theoretical philosophy as the ultimate science of being and knowing. The study of phenomena *beyond the scope of scientific inquiry*'.[733] Joseph Pappin regards metaphysics as an actual science in his work on Burke—'the science of being as being'.[734] Although Pappin explains that 'Burke is not a professional metaphysician' he makes a case for Burke as an unwitting metaphysician: 'Burke's political philosophy has a metaphysical basis as does his philosophy of God and human nature.'[735] While Pappin intends is to grasp Burke's 'conception of *politics*' through metaphysics or natural law; my objective in this chapter is to grasp Burke's conception of *religion* through sciences

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[732] J.T. Boulton, 'Edmund Burke's Letter to a Noble Lord: Apologia and Manifesto', *The Burke Newsletter*, 8 (1967), 695–701, (p. 691).
[733] 'The branch of philosophy that deals with the first principles of things or reality, including questions about being, substance, time, and space, causation, change, and identity (which are presupposed in the special sciences but do not belong to any one of them); theoretical philosophy as the ultimate science of being and knowing. The study of phenomena *beyond the scope of scientific inquiry*'. Oxford English Dictionary, 'metaphysics' <http://www.oed.com/>, [September 1st, 2012].
[734] Pappin, pp. 1, 91.
[735] *Ibid.*, pp. xv, xvi.

closer to 'positive law'—meaning, theories that are 'posited' or 'instituted or imposed by an authority, often as contrasted with natural law'.[736] Indeed, I will explain in this chapter the sort of experimental metaphysics Burke opposes, and why that undermines classifying him as a metaphysician—albeit, an 'unwitting' one. First, I believe it is necessary to address the potential complications inherent in interpreting Burke's writings in a scientific context (metaphysical science, and otherwise).

Burke in a scientific context

Before delving into the scientific metaphors laced through Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord* and the *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, some background on these texts is pertinent. The texts were published after Burke's retirement from parliament in 1794, after 28 years in the House of Commons. His retirement, and these publications, came after his only son Richard died; Richard's death, as we will see, figures in his *Letter to a Noble Lord*. In August of 1794, William Pitt proposed to grant Burke a Civil List pension of £1,200. He later gave him another grant, bringing the total to £3,700.[737] Later, in a debate in the House of Lords (on the Treason Bill, 13 November 1795), the Duke of Bedford criticised this gesture, insinuating that it amounted to Ministerial corruption, analogous to the financial extortion seen in the French Revolution:

> It [the French Revolution] was a revolution, the causes of which may be traced in the manners of a profligate and abandoned Court, in the conduct of a corrupt and despotic ministry, in the lavish expenditure of money, extorted from the penury of an oppressed and insulted people, and in a system of finances, brought by the

[736] 'instituted or imposed by an authority, often as contrasted with natural law […]', Oxford English Dictionary, 'positive law' <http://www.oed.com/>, [November 11th, 2012];
[737] Langford, 'Burke', ODNB, *ibid*.

> prosecution of an unprofitable war […] We, too have a ministry corrupt […] I say that we have a corrupt ministry: their corruption is proved by the places they have created for their own accommodation of their friends; by the pensions they have bestowed on their minions, and on those very persons who were the Advocates of economy.[738]

Interpretations of Burke's response to this (for example, from Boulton and Browne) explain *Letter to a Noble Lord* in the following way: Burke defending his pension by aligning the Duke of Bedford with the 'ideas of destruction, tyranny, and rapacity' associated with the French Revolution.[739] They do not explain that Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord* is returning an accusation first made by the Duke of Bedford: each accusing the other of being aligned with the same corrupting ideas that gave rise to the French Revolution (financial extortion). After Burke's 1790 attack against that very sort of rapacity (his *Reflections*), such commentary from the Duke of Bedford seems particularly injurious, and accounts for the inflammatory nature of the text. The Duke of Bedford was accusing Burke of much more than receiving undue remuneration; he was accusing him of subscribing to destructive practices, akin to those of the French revolutionaries. The publication of Burke's response to the Duke of Bedford's commentary (his *Letter to a Noble Lord*) on 24 February of 1796, occurs close to his further meditations on the events in France—his *Letters on a Regicide Peace*. So, we can conceive of the Duke of Bedford's comments as being particularly apposite for Burke—being accused of

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[738] *Parliamentary Register; or History of the Proceedings and Debates of the House of Lords, Containing an Account of the Most Interesting Speeches and Motions; accurate Copies of the most remarkable Letters and Papers of the most material Evidence, Petitions,* etc. *laid before and offered to the House During the Sixth Session of the Seventeenth Parliament of Great Britain,* vol. xlv (London: J. Debrett, 1796), p. 107–08.

[739] Boulton, 'Edmund Burke's Letter to a Noble Lord', p. 691.

practicing the very sort of subversive practices against which he was still railing in his *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, six years after the publication of his *Reflections*.

As for the publication of these letters, their issuing is a little complicated. The only publication of Burke's *Letters on a Regicide Peace* that received his authorization and was published while he was still living is the document combining his first two letters on the subject (*On the Overtures of Peace* and *Genius and Character of the French Revolution*), published by F. and C. Rivington on 20 October 1796 as *Two letters on a Regicide Peace*. John Owen published an unauthorized version one day before, from portions of the two letters; this document is titled *Thoughts on the Prospect of a Regicide Peace in a Series of Letters*.[740] The third and fourth letters (*Proposals for Peace* and *To the Earl Fitzwilliam*) were pieced together from proofs that Burke had approved and material Burke had collected. The fourth letter actually being the first in the series (written in 1795), these documents were published after his death—November 1797 by Walker King and French Laurence.[741]

The publication of Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord* and his *Letters on a Regicide Peace* occur in a time of much scientific development; some developments (e.g., as we shall see, those made by Joseph Priestley) receive direct mention in these texts. The wealth of scientific metaphor applied throughout all of the above documents lends credence to scholarship intended to understand further the scientific references within them. My critical analysis in this chapter offers some needed insight concerning the way

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[740] Langford, *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*, in *Writings*, IX, p. 187; see Edmund Burke, *Two letters addressed to a member of the present Parliament, on the proposals for peace with the regicide directory of France*, (London: John Owen, 1796), *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*, [September 1st, 2012].
[741] Langford, *Third Letter on a Regicide Peace*, in *Writings*, vol. ix, p. 297; Langford, *Fourth letter on a Regicide Peace, Letter to Lord Fitzwilliam*, in *Writings*, IX, p. 44–45.

science appears in Burke's later writings, and what that reveals about his conceptualization of religion.

However, there are some problems when considering Burke's thinking in a scientific context. The main problem is that Burke's response seats him in a tradition of thinking that opposed man's scientific hubris in attempting to understand the universe made by God. This opposition is seated on the 'ancient' side of an 'ancient' versus 'modern' debate about science; Richard Foster Jones comprehensively describes how thinking 'moved to dethrone Aristotle' came about in the sixteenth century.[742] Jones explains, 'The spirit of curiosity regarding nature and man, a distinctive trait of the Renaissance, was too strong to permit an entirely unbroken acquiescence in ancient learning.'[743] The important distinction between 'ancient' scientific thinking and 'modern' scientific thinking is, as Jones argues, the promotion of experimentation. Ancient scientific thinking is exemplified in the theories of bloodletting and humourism advanced by Hippocrates and Galen.[744] Jones identifies Francis Bacon as responsible for the great revolt of modern scientific thinking, 'arguing violently for a purely physical explanation of their ideas and emphasized the importance of experimentation and observation of nature instead of conformity to the ancients'.[745] Jones highlights the Protestant Reformation as marking a shift to embrace new science:

> The scientific movement, in England at any rate, is definitely connected with religious developments. If Protestantism facilitated the growth of

[742] Richard Foster Jones, *Ancients and Moderns, The Study of the Rise of the Scientific Movement in seventeenth-Century England*, (Toronto: General Publishing Company, 1961), p. 86.
[743] Jones, p. 87.
[744] Peter Brian, *Galen*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 1.
[745] Jones, p. 124.

> science through its anti-authoritarian bias, the extreme elements among the Protestants […] continued to serve the cause by embracing the new science largely because of its utilitarian value for the "public good".[746]

Jones' representation of modern science as succeeding the Reformation agrees with the definition of modernity used throughout this thesis; in this way, we can interpret Burke's criticism of a new culture of experimentation (in his *Letter to a Noble Lord*, and his *Letters on a Regicide Peace*) occurring against a background of ancient versus modern. We can further appreciate the notion of attempting to assume God's power as a modern one, invigorated by the rise of the scientific method, if it is set against the background of an ancient understanding of God's cosmic role. Zygmunt Bauman constructs such a background. Below, he refers to the Book of Job, seated in ancient Judaism in the time before the Hebrew Prophet Jesus. Bauman explains the hubris of humans thinking they may direct the actions of God:

> God may strike at will, and if He refrains from striking it is only because this is His (good, benign, benevolent, Loving) will. The idea that humans may control God's action by whatever means, including the means which God Himself recommended (that is, total and unconditional submission, meek and faithful following of His commands and sticking to the letter of the Diving Law), is a blasphemy.[747]

So, thinking it is blasphemous to control the actions of God and Nature is ancient; a scenario in which humans are in charge of actions in nature is modern (referring to

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[746] *Ibid.*, p. 84.
[747] Bauman, 'Seeking in Modern Athens', p. 73.

Bauman's earlier explanation of the modern understanding of the relationship between humans and God).[748]

This culture of experimentation, without regard to human posterity, is manifested in the action of the French Revolution, and the experimenters following such thinking in England. In the excerpts from these texts to follow, I will show Burke's aversion to a new scientific thinking that conceives of things comprised from small particles, rendered easily divisible and disintegrative. I believe, in Burke's representation of science, we can see a general opposition to thinking that promotes division, which is counterintuitive to unity. Opposition to this thinking is not unique to Burke. The aspects of Burke's representation science that promote the strength of unity in an aggregate (as we will see) resonate with thinking from Burke's contemporary, Samuel Johnson:

> Long calculations or complex diagrams affright the timorous and unexperienced from a second view; but if we have skill sufficient to analise them into simple principles, it will be discovered that our fear was groundless. "Divide and conquer," is a principle equally just in science as in policy. Complication is a species of confederacy, which, while it continues united, bids defiance to the most active and vigorous intellect; but of which every member is separately weak, and which may therefore be quickly subdued if it can once be broken.[749]

A thing that is comprised of individual members (or individual atomic particles) is weak and easily broken. The 'complication' of a confederacy ensures continuation through

[748] Bauman, 'Seeking in Modern Athens', p. 80.
[749] Samuel Johnson, *The Rambler*, 4 vols, twelfth edition, (London: T. Longman, B. Law and Son, H. Baldwin, J. Robson, C. Dilly, et all, 1793), III, p. 187.

unity. Widening a (religious) foundation strengthens it; not (as Burke put it in his *Letter to Sir Hercules*) narrowing it: 'I should recommend it to your serious thoughts, whether the narrowing of the foundation is always the best way to secure the building?[750] I will show how Burke's representation of world religions is aligned with ancient (non-atomic) thinking, inasmuch as he is opposed to conceiving of things comprised of divisible atoms, warning against dissection and splitting. Yet, his representation of religion is nonetheless progressive, inasmuch as it is accepting of differing elements in what he will refer to as an 'aggregate' of faiths, '[a]t bottom, these are all the same' all 'derived from the same sources'.[751] In this way, Burke's representation of world religions resonates with the same notion expressed by Johnson above: there is strength in oneness and confederacy. I believe this resonates with the way critical theorists apply alchemy as a metaphor for the evolution of religious culture in modernity, in terms of finding a common element among differing elements—or (to use Johnson's words above) to render the conception of things 'into a simple principle'.

If we think about metaphysics as a 'science', as Pappin does above ('the science of being as being'), then we encounter another problem with treating Burke in a scientific context.[752] Pappin writes 'Burke's metaphysics reflects the reality and consistency of change within the context of a stable, hierarchically structured universe as created and sustained by God.'[753] However, if we reach back to some of Burke's early writings, we can see a potential problem in suggesting that Burke's metaphysics reflects something about God, and the universe created by God. In the *Vindication*, Burke argued that

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[750] Burke, *Letter To Sir Hercules*, *Writings*, IX, p. 630.
[751] Burke, *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*, *Writings*, IX, p. 248.
[752] Pappin, pp. 1, 91.
[753] *Ibid.*, p. xvi.

rational thinking is unavailing 'when we must seek in a profound Subject, not only for Arguments, but for new Materials of Argument, their Measures and their Method of Arrangement; when we must go out of the Sphere of our ordinary Ideas […]'.[754] In other words, some concepts, like the nature of the 'universe as created and sustained by God' cannot (or should not) be explained away by science. Burke continues in the *Vindication*: 'what would become of the World if the Practice of all moral Duties, and the Foundations of Society, rested upon having their Reasons made clear and demonstrative to every Individual?'.[755] If metaphysics is, as Pappin writes, 'the science of being as being', or if it is '[t]he study of phenomena *beyond the scope of scientific inquiry*', then there is a problem in viewing it as a key to unlocking some of Burke's thinking about things 'out of the Sphere of our ordinary Ideas' (like a universe as created by God). The application of the 'science of being as being' does not quite seem to fit. While Burke does offer metaphysical conceptions, he is careful about the shortcomings of his human capacity for doing so; in the *Enquiry*, he expressed his hesitation of even using the concept of God as an example, because it is too great a concept for us to fathom: 'I purposely avoided when I first considered this subject, to introduce the idea of that great and tremendous being, as an example in an argument so light as this […]'.[756] So, a branch of 'science' that would claim to reduce a tremendous being to a formula, based on speculation (i.e. metaphysics), is a science of speculation—much like the government of speculation against which he rails in his *Reflections* (i.e. the French National Assembly, operating on abstract metaphysical theories, divorced from reality and circumstance). I do not mean to disavow

[754] Burke, *Vindication*, *Writings*, I, p. 135.
[755] *Ibid.*, p. 136.
[756] Burke, *Enquiry*, *Writings*, I, p. 239.

what Paul Langford said of Burke's 'commitment' to 'intense and all-pervading spiritual reality' of a deity, or to argue that Burke rejects metaphysics entirely; I only outline the sort of metaphysics Burke warns against—'barbarous metaphysics' of the French revolutionaries, experimental metaphysics by which 'The calculators [of the National Assembly] compute them out of their senses'.[757]

Schaffer explains Burke's opposition to experimental metaphysics, or (to use Burke's words) 'barbarous metaphysics'. Schaffer shows how Burke stood against the conflating 'attempt to connect the work of philosophical genius, natural power and popular right'; Burke viewed conflating natural or scientific thinking with philosophical thinking as a dangerous muddling of ethics and reason.[758] 'Their revolution followed from a false natural philosophy. […] The Jacobin theatre of politics was a world of illusion and crude spectacle. Their philosophical supporters were no better than wizards […]'.[759] There was a correlation between the disintegrative doctrinal claims of a new sect of scientific thinkers and the 'barborous metaphysics' of the French Revolution. We will see that Burke identifies Priestley among the sect of 'analytical legislators and constitution-venders [who] are quite as busy in their trade of decomposing organization […]'.[760] Priestley followed the atomic theories of Roger Boscovich. In Boscovich's *De Viribus Vivis* (1745), he purported that atoms existed in a state more akin to elasticity—constantly dissolving and recombining.[761] Priestley, in his *Disquisitions relating to Matter and Spirit* (1777), thought this conception of atoms indicated that all matter in the

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[757] Langford, ODNB, *ibid*; Edmund Burke, *Second Letter on a Regicide Peace*, *Writings*, IX, p. 267.
[758] Schaffer, 'Genius', p. 85.
[759] *Ibid.*, p. 87.
[760] Burke, *Letter to a Noble*, *Writings*, IX, p. 179.
[761] For more on Boscovich's influence on Priestley, see Mary Hesse's, *Forces and Fields: A Study of Action at a Distance in the History of Physics*, (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1961).

world and spirit were comprised of the same substance, that there was no division between mind and body (and, therefore, the soul); by extension, we cannot only think of God in terms of his material composition, but we can think of humans as being comprised of the same matter. In his *Disquisitions*, Priestley explains:

> '[…] the strict metaphysical notion of immateriality is really a modern thing, being unkown to all the wise ancients, whether heathens of christians; and therefore, that the rejection of it ought not to give any alarm to the serious christian'.[762]

Even though Priestley explains that conceiving of God in the material is not a new thing, but actually, a thing conceived of by the ancients, the hubris of his metaphysical interpretation of matter earned him much criticism, including criticism from Burke.[763] Similar to Jones above, Bruno Latour explains how the Protestant Reformation and the Glorious Revolution mark a dynamic wherein the laws of nature and God could be defined in a laboratory—or, to borrow Bauman's phrasing again, a dynamic wherein humans are more in charge. Latour refers to Robert Boyle's seventeenth-century experiments, to which we shall return later in this chapter:

> Boyle's air pump, for example, might seem to be a rather frightening chimera, since it produces a laboratory vacuum artificially, a vacuum that simultaneously permits the definition of the Laws of Nature, the action of God, and the settlement of disputes in England at the time of the Glorious

[762] Joseph Priestley, Disquisitions relating to matter and spirit. To which is added, the history of the philosophical doctrine concerning the origin of the soul, and the nature of matter; with its influence on Christianity, especially with respect to the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ, (London: J. Johnson, 1777), p. 216.
[763] For the various negative responses to Priestley's *Disquisitions*, see F.W. Gibbs, *Joseph Priestley: Adventurer in Science and Champion of Truth*, (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1965), p. 99–100.

> Revolution.[764]

Part of constructing the myth of modernity (as Latour implies) is being fearful of the encroachment of such modern scientific developments upon ancient territories once occupied by the actions of God. Latour suggests the possibility of a different construction, wherein the rise of the scientific method could have been interpreted differently where political mobilization was concerned, as a chance to understand the laws of nature and God in partnership with modern science—not as a threat to traditions of theology and royalty:

> From now on the English seventeenth century will go on to construct Royalty, Nature and theology with the scientific community and the laboratory. The air's spring will join the actors that inhabit England. Yet this recruitment of a new ally poses no problem, since there is no chimera, since nothing monstrous has been produced, since nothing more has been done than to discover the Laws of Nature. *The scope of mobilization is directly proportional to the impossibility of directly conceptualizing its relations with the social order*. The less the moderns think they are blended, the more they blend. The more science is absolutely pure, the more it is intimately bound of with the fabric of society.[765]

So, as Latour suggests, scientific developments (like Boyle's air pump) can be perceived as fierce mobilizations of a movement to subvert traditional social order. However, the fear of such scientific developments as a monstrous delusion (not an ally) is only a constructed concept; traditions of theology and royalty actually can exist in the context of

[764] Latour, p. 42.
[765] *Ibid.*, p. 42–43.

scientific enquiry. In this way, the efforts of Enlightenment minds to separate ancient from modern (the way Hume, for example, separated ancient practices from our 'modern expedient') are typical of the myth of modernity. Burke engages in this same separation: we shall see how he perceives an experimental political mobilization, producing monstrous delusions—in fact referring to Rousseau and Voltaire as 'monsters'.[766] In his *Letter to a Noble Lord*, we will see how Burke attempts not to blend with modern experimental metaphysics, the hubris of sharing in God's spirit. In this attempt to denounce the sort of experimental metaphysical thinking that would promote division, he blends religious culture. If we consider all of this, the image of him as a metaphysician becomes less stable. In other words, Burke consistently argues that trying to conceive of things such as government in scientific, mathematical, or metaphysical terms is dangerous. As Burke writes in his *Reflections*:

> The legislators who framed the antient republics knew that their business was too arduous to be accomplished with no better apparatus than metaphysics of an under-graduate, and the mathematics and arithmetic of an exciseman.[767]

Therefore, if we are to think of metaphysics as a science, it may be problematic when trying to unlock Burke's thinking, inasmuch as scientific or 'mathematic' thinking does not articulate the in-exactitude of the things that exist 'out of the Sphere of our ordinary Ideas'.

However, defining the sort of experimental metaphysics that Burke opposes may create another problem. It may be that the work from Schaffer (as discussed above) along

[766] Burke, *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*, *Writings*, IX, p. 241.
[767] Burke, *Reflections*, *Writings*, VIII, p. 231.

with P.J. Stanlis' position (discussed below) contribute to an interpretation of Burke that seats him in opposition to the progress of mathematical scientific thought, as a whole.[768] Just as Burke does not reject metaphysics *in toto*, I also do not believe he is a firm opposer of scientific thinking. Stanlis explains Burke's opposition to forcing abstract concepts into frameworks of scientific or mathematical thinking. Pappin's work is indebted to Stanlis' writing about Burke and natural law; before Pappin writes about the metaphysics of Aristotle as being distinct from Aquinas', Stanlis writes of the same distinction and how it explains Burke's 'principle of prudence':

> According to this distinction, natural science and mathematics utilize speculative reason, while ethics, law, and politics employ practical reason. Speculative reason does not involve man's free will but is concerned with things fixed in the physical order of the universe and connected closely to this order by its universal principles and its logically derived conclusions. Practical reason involves the nature and actions of men, which are under general laws of moral necessity […] For Burke, political theory could never be an exact mathematical science because matter requiring moral prudence could never be settled *a priori* or through mere empirical experience.[769]

Stanlis and Pappin effectively write the same thing: that Burke opposed a priori, or speculative, reasoning in abstract matters. However, Stanlis and Pappin come to different conclusions: where Burke's political theories are concerned, Pappin believes it can be understood through the science of metaphysics, and Stanlis believes that political theory

[768] Schaffer, 'Genius', p. 82; Stanlis, pp. 114–15.
[769] Stanlis, pp. 114–15.

and scientific thinking do not, for Burke, correlate. However, we should be careful not to narrowly classify Burke as a reactionary against scientific thought altogether. In the same vein as Stanlis, I argue that the same in-exactitude applies to Burke's representation of religion—that it cannot be viewed in exact mathematical scientific terms. A passage in Burke's *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* (1791), written in response to accusations of apostasy following his *Reflections*, explains that morality is not defined by absolute lines, like in mathematical reasoning; further, that the peripheries defining morality require modification, which mathematical reasoning cannot facilitate.

> Nothing universal can be rationally affirmed on any moral or political subject. Pure metaphysical abstraction does not belong to these matters. The lines of morality are not like ideal lines of mathematics. They are broad and deep as well as long. They admit of exceptions; they demand modifications. These exceptions and modifications are not made by the process of logic, but by the rules of prudence.[770]

I argue that this is how Burke's representation of religion manifests itself: scientific boundaries do not apply; lines between differing sects are blended; modification is necessary for conservation. Again, while I am unsure about branding Burke as an unwitting metaphysician or seeing metaphysics as a solution to understanding his thinking, I do find what Pappin suggests (above) about Burke's apprehension of the 'reality and consistency of change' useful for understanding his conceptualization of

[770] Edmund Burke, *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, in *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke: The French Revolution, 1790-1794*, ed. by Paul Langford, and L.G. Mitchell, 9 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), VIII, pp. 60–201, (p. 81).

religion.[771] However, I will argue that Burke's understanding of the necessity of change is not concurrent with Pappin and Schaffer's interpretation of Burke as a Conservative 'servant of the *ancien régime'*.[772] We know that Burke argued in his *Reflections*: It ['occasional deviation', or change] is far from impossible to reconcile, if we do not suffer ourselves to be tangled in the mazes of metaphysic sophistry […] A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation'.[773] The change necessary for the conservation of a state is not achieved through metaphysics, or a scientific, mathematical approach. Joseph Priestley responds to this idea from Burke in his *Letters to Edmund Burke Occasioned by His Reflections* (1791), he writes:

> One of the most curious paradoxes in this work is that the rights of men […] are all extremes, and in proportion as they are metaphysically true, they are morally and politically false. Now by metaphysically true can only be meant strictly and properly true, and how this can be in any sense false, is to me incomprehensible.[774]

Perhaps Priestley is observing what Pappin later does: that Burke engages with metaphysics while admonishing them. More importantly, above Priestley legitimizes metaphysics by arguing that if something is metaphysically true, it is 'strictly and properly true'. Priestley, as we shall see, figures in Burke's references to science. Priestley, of course, was prolific in his publishing of scientific pamphlets concerning

[771] Pappin, p. xvi.
[772] Schaffer, 'Genius', p. 82; Pappin, p. 28.
[773] Burke, *Reflections*, *Writings*, VIII, p. 72.
[774] Priestley, *Letters to Edmund Burke*, p. 25.

electricity and air (his theories on phlogiston, and his discovery of seven gases).[775] Above, Priestley's legitimization of 'the science of being as being' (metaphysics) corresponds with the emerging legitimization of the scientific appropriation of matters social, ethical, and moral (i.e. the modern emergence of social sciences); indeed, Priestley contributed to the emerging scientific mathematical conception of abstract concepts, his 'Maxims of political arithmetic' (1798) conceived of politics in mathematical terms.[776] Alan Wolfe writes about Burke's opposition to the emerging social sciences: 'his castigation of the dominance of rational social and political analysis continues to reverberate in Western thought.'[777] However, Stanlis elaborates more on Burke's scruples about formulating abstract ideas of nature in scientific, or mathematical, terms. Stanlis' work engages with Burke and Natural Law, which, arguably, may come closest to discussing Burke and religious thinking. The scope of this thesis cannot allow for interaction with the various theories of 'natural law' (which range from the classical theories that suggest an orderly universe, ruled by a system of law that is purported by nature, or 'implanted by nature in the human mind […]', e.g., from Plato's *Gorgias* and his *Republic*, and Cicero's *De Legibus* to later theories that refer to a law of nature as 'a precept, or a general rule, found out by reason, by which a man is forbidden to do that

[775] Robert E. Schofield, 'Priestley, Joseph, (1733–1804), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, [September 10th, 2012].
[776] For an in-depth study of Priestley, see R.E. Schofield, *The Enlightenment of Joseph Priestley: a Study of his Life and Works from 1733 to 1773*, (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997); for more specifically on his 'Maxims o political arithmetic' (1798), see Jenny Graham, 'Joseph Priestley in America', in *Joseph Priestley, Scientist, Philosopher, and Theologian*, ed. by Isabel Rivers and David L. Wykes, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 203–31, (p. 223).
[777] Alan Wolfe, 'Democracy, Social Science, and Rationality—Reflections on Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France', in *Edmund Burke, Reflections on the Revolution in France*, ed. by Frank M. Turner, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 269–87, (p. 269).

which is destructive of his life […]' (e.g. Thomas Hobbes in his *Leviathan*, 1651).[778] However, it is worth noting that many scholars connect Burke's thinking on natural law to his political theory: Stephen K. White, Peter Stanlis, Francis P. Canavan, B.T. Wilkins, and Joseph L. Pappin, all see a version of natural law (or, respectively, the law of nature) as the key to cohering Burke's *political* thinking.[779] I wish to complement their work by understanding Burke's *religious* thinking, though not necessarily by metaphysics. Stanlis explains that one of the effects of this emerging scientific conception of things beyond the scope of ordinary ideas is the relegation of a theistic conception of things:

> There is a direct connection between the abandonment of the theistic conception of Natural Law and the supremacy of mathematical logic and self-sufficiency of private reason in natural rights. […] Grotius was the first modern to say for illustrative purposes, that Natural Law would be valid even if God did not exist.[780]

However, I am not sure I agree with his placement of Burke in opposition to Grotius. While Stanlis (like Pappin and others above) is concerned with Burke and political theory, I believe the way Burke represents religion resonates with Grotius. Hugo Grotius famously was arrested for defending the rights of civil authority over religious

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[778] 'implanted by nature in the human mind […]', Oxford English Dictionary, 'natural law' <http://www.oed.com/>, [November 11th, 2012]; Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1651), (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 109; for two more comprehensive studies on natural law and its evolution, see Andrew R. Dyck, *A Commentary on Cicero, De Legibus*, (Michigan, USA: University of Michigan, 2003), p. 1, 51, and also Robert N. Wilkin, 'Cicero and the Law of Nature,' in *Origins of the Natural Law Tradition*, (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1954); see also Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. by Benjamin Jowett, (New York, USA: Dover Publications, 2003).

[779] White, p. 2; Stanlis, *Edmund Burke and the Natural Law*; Canavan, *Political Reason*; B.T. Wilkins in *The Problem of Burke's Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), and also Joseph L. Pappin, 'Edmund Burke's Progeny: Recent Scholarship on Burke's Political Philosophy', *Political Science Reviewer*, 35, (2006), 10–65.

[780] Stanlis, p. 23.

authority.[781] Grotius' conceptualization of religious toleration, for example, is very similar to Burke's. Grotius argued that generalized belief in God should be prioritized over doctrinal difference; that the invention of religious sectarianism was altogether different from the concept of God: 'That Authority about sacred things belongs to the highest powers […] That this authority and the sacred function are distinct […]'.[782] In Chapter 1 of this thesis, I argued that, for Burke, sacredness transcends the power of any particular Church, even if that entails slighting a Deity, for sacredness can be experienced with or without God.[783] Grotius was at one with this vision. He also deplored sectarian divisions between Christian states, and the trouble arising from trifling differences between religious sects:

> I saw in the whole Christian world a license of fighting at which even barbarous nations might blush. Wars were begun on trifling pretexts or none at all, and carried on without any reference of law, Divine or human.[784]

In Chapter 2 of this thesis, I showed how Burke shared this outlook, and outlined his expanded conceptualisation of religious sacredness.[785] I would argue, as Grotius

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[781] Hamilton Vreeland, *Hugo Grotius: The Father of the Modern Science of International Law*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 111.
[782] Hugo Grotius' *De Imperiou Summarum Potestatum Circa Sacra* (On the power of sovereigns concerning religious affairs), (Paris, 1647) as quoted in Harm-Jan van Dam's '*De Imperiou Summarum Potestatum Circa Sacra'*, in *Hugo Grotius Theologian—Essays in Honor of G.H.M. Posthumus Meyjes*, ed. by Henk J.M. Nellen and Edwin Rabbie, (New York: E.J. Brill, 2001), p. 21.
[783] O'Connell, pp. 109-21.
[784] Hugo Grotius, *Prolegomena to the Law of War and Peace* (1625), *Hugo Grotius: Essays on his life and Works*, ed. by A Lysen, (Leyden: A.W. Sythoff, 1925), p. 46; see also Edward Dumbauld, *The Life and Legal Writings of Hugo Grotius*, (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1969).
[785] O'Connell, p. 169; 'I wish, with you, that we may not be so far Englishmen and Scotchmen, as to forget we are men; or, (I am sorry to be obliged to wish without you,) even so far presbyterians, or episcopalians, or catholics, as to forget we are Christians, which is our common bond of religion while we are distinguished into sects, as the former is when we are divided into states.' Burke, *Letter to Rev. John Erskine*, in *Correspondence*, II, p. 269.

conceptualized a natural law possible without the necessity of God, Burke perceived a general sacredness without the necessity of God, or religious feeling without religious sectarian identification. However, I do agree with Stanlis' view, 'For Burke, political theory could never be an exact mathematical science'; moreover, I would add that, for Burke, religious conception could never be made into a mathematical science.[786] Where Burke's conceptualization of religion is concerned, fixed lines of definition (exact mathematical terms) do not apply; to use Stanlis' words, 'They are broad and deep as well as long. They admit of exceptions; they demand modifications. These exceptions and modifications are not made by the process of logic […]'.[787] This makes his extensive use of scientific and medical metaphor in his *Letter to a Noble Lord* and his *Letters on a Regicide Peace* seem, at first, ironic. I argue that once we understand the nature of his scientific references (which are almost always linked with religion), we can see that scientific metaphor helps Burke to offer a representation of religion that blends sectarian difference. To understand this representation, we now need to look closely at Burke's use of metaphors of medical science, in his earlier writings, as well as his *Letter to a Noble Lord*.

Context of Medical and Scientific metaphor; disintegrative science vitiating religious establishment

We can see various representations of science appearing throughout Burke's writings, used as metaphors for criticising Jacobinism, French *philosophes*, the National Assembly, and general destructiveness of unrestrained reason. In Burke's *A Letter to a*

[786] Stanlis, pp. 114–15.
[787] Edmund Burke, *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, *Writings*, IV, p. 81.

Member of the National Assembly, he addresses Francois-Louis Thibault de Menonville, deputy to the Estates General from Mirecourt in Lorraine:

> Your state doctors do not so much as pretend that any good whatsoever has hitherto been derived from their operations, or that the public has prospered in any one instance, under their management. The nation is sick, very sick, by their medicines. But the charlatans tell them that what is past cannot be helped;—they have taken draught, and they must wait its operation with patience;—that the first effects indeed are unpleasant, but that the very sickness is inevitable in all constitutional revolutions;—that the body must pass through pain to ease;—that the prescriber is not an empirick who proceeds by vulgar experience, but one who grounds his practice on the sure rules of art, which cannot possibly fail.[788]

Burke characterises the malady of Jacobinism, illustrating France as an infirm patient—made ill by the medicine proscribed by doctors, who assure the patient that illness is part of the healing process (or revolutionary process). The doctors (the prescribers) are, of course, the National Assembly, forcing an intoxicating, yet harmful draught on the state. Burke further criticises the National Assembly through medical metaphor:

> The Assembly recommends to its youth a study of the bold experimenters in morality. Every body knows that there is a great dispute amongst their leaders, which of them is the best resemblance to Rousseau. In truth, they all resemble him. His blood they transfuse into their minds and into their manners. Him [Rousseau] they study; him they meditate; him they turn

[788] Burke, *Letter to a Member*, in *Writings,* VIII, p. 300.

> over in all the time they can spare from the laborious mischief of the day, or the debauches of the night. Rousseau is their canon of holy writ; in his life he is their canon of Polycletus; he is their standard figure of perfection.[789]

The Assembly are doctors, prescribers, experimenters, who engage in operation transfuse the thinking of Rousseau into their minds, which alludes to a blood transfusion. Of course, Burke is referring to Rousseau's pervasive conceptual influence.[790] Burke's use of medical science as a metaphor for the permeation of Rousseau's thought is potentially revealing: the idea of blood transfusion had been thought about since the fifteenth century, but the first successful blood transfusion into a human (from a sheep, incidentally) was achieved by Dr Jean-Baptiste Denis on 15 June 1667, physician to King Louis XIV of France.[791] This, of course, comes long before the deposed Louis XVI, but, nevertheless, is worth noting, as if Burke were associating some kind of cultural history of involuntary infusion (blood transfusion) with the infusion of subversive thinking, or the infusion of animalistic (and therefore barbarous) thinking. Further, he links the conceptual transfusion with holiness; rather, he suggests that Rousseau transfuses his unholy doctrine into the youth of France. Here, we begin to see how the use of medical scientific metaphor communicates Burke's worry about disintegrative thinking concerning religious establishment.

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[789] *Ibid.*, p. 312.
[790] His writings, e.g., *The Social Contract* (1766), and *Confessions* (1782).
[791] Roswell Park, *An Epitome of the History of Medicine*, (Philadelphia: The F.A. Davis Company, 1897), p. 176.

Burke continues to use medical science metaphors to illustrate the religiously disintegrating qualities of Jacobinism in his *Second letter to Hercules*. Below, he refers to the disintegrating thought associated with Jacobinism as being comprised of ill humours:

> Whatever ill-humours are afloat in the State, they will be sure to discharge themselves in a mingled torrent in the *Cloaca Maxima* of Jacobinism. Therefore people ought well to look about them. First, the physicians are to take care that they do nothing to irritate this epidemical distemper. It is a foolish thing to have the better of the patient in a dispute. The complaint or its cause ought to be removed, and wise and lenient arts ought to precede the measures of vigour.[792]

A further, and quite repulsive, medical science metaphor is seen above in his description of the ill humours of the patient (the state) being discharged into a giant sewer (*Cloaca Maxima*). Geraldine Lee-Treweek writes, 'In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the notion of the four humours [bile, black bile, blood and phlegm] was very much "in fashion" in medical circles.'[793] Bloodletting, 'emetics (to bring on vomiting) and purgatives (to bring on bowel movements) were prescribed' in medicine.[794] The notion of humours was not new or experimental; it serves Burke's literary purpose to describe, what he perceives as, the veritable sewer of subversive thinking that is the new state in France. It also illustrates an alignment with classical thinking about medical pathology.

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[792] Burke, *Second Letter To Sir Hercules*, *Writings*, IX, p. 667–68.
[793] Geraldine Lee-Treweek, 'Knowledge, Names, Fraud and Trust', in *Complementary and Alternative Medicine: Structures and Safeguards*, ed. by, Geraldine Lee-Treweek, Tom Heller, Hilary MacQueen, Julie Stone and Sue Spurr, (Oxford: Routledge, 2005), p. 13.
[794] Lee-Treweek, p. 13.

The texts above begin to reveal Burke's general engagement with medical science, in terms of literary usage. However, I do not believe it is as simple as Schaffer and Stanlis suggest—that this engagement reveals Burke's opposition to scientific thinking as a whole, and thus, his serving the *ancien régime*.[795] Indeed, I argue that his use of scientific metaphors in *Letter to a Noble Lord* reveals something more complicated: Burke is opposing new, experimental, scientific thinking. He communicates this in his unfavourable description of transfusion above and by seating his rhetoric in classical theories of pathology (e.g. the humours). He reaches beyond medicine and into other branches of science: astronomy, geography, and physiology. I argue that the most revealing of the branches with which he engages are early chemistry and atomism.

In his *Letter to a Noble Lord,* Burke suggests that the Duke of Bedford's criticism of his pension follows in the same vein as others who have criticised him (e.g., Thomas Paine in his *Rights of Man,* 1791 and Joseph Priestley in his *Letters to Edmund Burke Occasioned by His Reflections,* 1791):

> To be ill spoken of, in whatever language they speak, by the zealots of the new sect in philosophy and politicks, of which these noble persons think so charitably, and of which others think so justly, to me, is no matter of uneasiness or surprise. […] I have to thank the Bedfords and the Lauderdales for having so faithfully and so fully acquitted towards me whatever arrear of debt was left undischarged by the Preistleys and the Paines.[796]

[795] Schaffer, 'Genius', p. 82; Stanlis, pp. 114–15.
[796] Burke, *Letter to a Noble, Writings*, vol. ix, p. 146.

Burke lists the Duke of Bedford along with Priestley and Paine as comprising a new sect of thinkers of experimentation and disintegration. He writes of these men as speaking in the zealous language of a new sect; below, he elaborates on that new sect, when he complains that critics will not leave him alone, even in his advanced years, and grief over the death of his son:

> Why will they not let me remain in obscurity and inaction? Are they apprehensive, that if an atom of me remains, the sect has something to fear? […] In my wretched condition, though hardly to be classed with the living, I am not safe from them. They have tigers to fall upon animated strength. They have hyenas to prey upon carcasses. The national menagerie is collected by the first physiologists of the time; and it is defective in no description of savage nature. They pursue, even such as me, into the obscurest retreats, and haul them before their revolutionary tribunals. Neither sex, nor-age—not the sanctuary of the tomb is sacred to them. They have so determined a hatred to all privileged orders, that they deny even to the departed, the sad immunities of the grave.[797]

Burke mocks the scientific thinking of the new sect, which does not make a distinction between the atoms comprising human life and other life. Burke also is criticising new thinking that disintegrates things into particles, or atoms—when he refers to their fear of 'an atom' of his being remaining (after his death, or after the critical attacks he has endured from the Duke of Bedford, and Priestley and Paine). The theory of 'atomism' ('the doctrine or theory that all things are formed of tiny indivisible particles') was

[797] *Ibid.*, p. 147.

asserted by Democritus (c. 460–370 BCE), but then dismissed by Aristotle, and disregarded for 1,500 years.[798] Atomism was widely rejected through the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in favour of a nonatomic understanding of matter. William Newman explains:

> At the beginning of the seventeenth century, only a generation before the birth of Isaac Newton, atomism was not widely upheld in Europe. Indeed, precisely the opposite was accepted by most of the learned community as an article of faith. Material change was generally explained not by the associate and dissociation of microscopic particles but rather by the imposition and removal of immaterial forms.[799]

Newman writes that 'natural philosophers in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries […] explicitly upheld the absolute homogeneity of mixtures (and therefore the nonatomic), impermanent character of their constituents'.[800] This nonatomic understanding of matter, as Newman explains, was interlinked with faith. While, historically, Robert Boyle is credited with reviving atomism in England, in his treatise *Of Anatomical Philosophy* (c. 1652–54), the legacy of atomism in the Newtonian sense shares a feature with the atomism of the early seventeenth-century.[801] Brian Young explains a 'Newtonian physico-theology' studied by the Cambridge circle of Lockean divines: 'Study of Newton's philosophy revealed a natural religious apologetic, a physico-theology

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[798] Oxford English Dictionary, 'atomism', <http://www.oed.com/>, [September 3rd, 2012]; Margaret Christine Campbell and Natalie Goldstein, *Discovering Atoms*, (New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 2012), pp. 9–14.
[799] William R. Newman, *Atoms and Alchemy: Chymistry and the Experimental Origins of the Scientific Revolution*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 4.
[800] *Ibid.*, p. 4.
[801] Michael Hunter, 'Boyle, Robert, (1627–1691)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, [September 3rd, 2012].

traditionally understood as complementing the truths of revelation.'[802] Adam Sedgwick (a Woodwardian Professor, then chair, of Geology from 1818 to 1873), wrote *A Discourse on the Studies of The University* (Cambridge, 1834) wherein he describes this physico-theology:

> A study of the Newtonian philosophy, as affecting our moral powers and capacities (the subject I am now pressing on your thoughts), does not terminate mere negations. It teaches us to see the finger of God in all things animate and inanimate, and gives us an exalted conception of his attributes, placing before us the clearest proof of their reality; and so prepares, or ought to prepare, the mind for that reception of the higher illumination, which brings the rebellious faculties into obedience to the divine will.[803]

If we think of the myth of modernity constructed by Enlightenment minds, described by Latour above—wherein modern scientific enquiry threatens traditional faith and theology—we can perhaps see more of a harmonious blending between scientific enquiry and religious faith in Newton's nineteenth-century legacy. However, for certain Enlightenment minds in the eighteenth century (I am referring to Burke's references to physiologists and atoms above) the fear of a sect that construes things as divisible, or as comprised from atoms and particles, which may be disintegrated, is still present. Burke uses the idea of the atom to mock this experimental and scientific way of thinking, to illustrate its absurdity—much like the way he illustrated the absurdity of Bolingbroke's

[802] Young, p. 87; Young refers to Edmund Law (1703–87) and William Law (1688–1761) as members of this circle. Young, p. 12.
[803] Adam Sedgwick, *A Discourse On the Studies of The University*, (Cambridge: Pitt Press, 1834), p. 14.

criticism of Established Religion in his *Vindication* by using 'the same Engines which were employed for the Destruction of Religion […].'[804]

Burke goes on to refer to other branches of science in his *Letter to a Noble Lord*. For example, below he writes of the influence of revolutionary thinking (the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*, and possibly Paine's *Rights of Man*) in reference to contemporary developments in astronomy:

> Astronomers have supposed that if a certain comets whose path intercepted the ecliptic had met the earth in some (I forget what) sign, it would have whirled us along with it, in its eccentric course, into God knows what regions of heat and cold. Had the portentous comet of the Rights of Man (which "*from its horrid hair shakes pestilence and war,*" and "*with fear of change perplexes monarchs*"), had that comet crossed upon us in that internal state of England, nothing human could have prevented our being irresistibly hurried out of the highway of heaven into all the vices, crimes, horrors, and miseries of the French Revolution.[805]

First, Burke is engaging in the same device that he does in the previous passage from his *Letter to a Noble Lord*: he is engaging with the terminology of the thinking, which he wishes to criticise in order to mock it. He does this when he writes that this comet was thought to hit the earth under some 'sign', by which he alludes to astrology, which (since the seventeenth century) had been distinguished from astronomy, closer to divination

[804] Burke, *Vindication*, *Writings*, I, p. 134.
[805] Burke, *Letter to a Noble*, *Writings*, IX, p. 151.

than science.[806] In this way, he undermines the new scientific thinking by suggesting it as pseudo-sorcery—as something set in opposition to religious tradition. The Langford edition of the text suggests that Burke may be referring to Joseph-Jérome-Lefrancais De La Lande (1732-1807), specifically his *Réflexions sur les comètes qui peuvent approcher de la terre*, (1773—literally *Reflections on the Comets which can approach Earth*), which predicted that a comet would destroy Earth.[807] Burke refers to Jacobin thinking as a comet (destructive and disintegrative) by which England was advantageously untouched, and therefore, kept on the 'highway of heaven'. Conceptually, from the last two passages, we can understand that experimental thinking that would disintegrate or divide is antithetical to the sacred, and therefore, diverted away from righteousness, and the 'highway of heaven'. While his reference to astronomy continues to communicate his worry about disintegrative thinking, it is references to the new chemistry of atoms and elements that most powerfully deliver Burke's criticism of the Duke of Bedford and this new sect of experimenters—like the French *philosophes*, both would sacrifice humanity for fanatical experiments:

> He is made for them in every part of their double character. As robbers, to them he is a noble booty; as speculatists, he is a glorious subject for their experimental philosophy. He affords matter for an extensive analysis in all the branches of their science, geometrical physical, civil, and political. These philosophers are fanatics; independent of any interest, which if it

[806] 'astrology is generally distinguished as the "art" or practical application of astronomy to mundane affairs […] the modern semantic distinction between astrology and astronomy gradually developed and had become largely fixed by the 17th cent.', Oxford English Dictionary, 'astrology', <http://www.oed.com/>, [November 13th, 2012].

[807] Joseph-Jérome-Lefrancais De La Lande (1732–1807), specifically his *Réflexions sur les comètes qui peuvent approcher de la terre*, (1773), (Paris: Chez Gilbert, Libraire, Quai des Augustins, 1773).

operated alone would make them much more tractable, they are carried with such an head-long rage towards every desperate trial that they would sacrifice the whole human race to the slightest of their experiments. […] Naturally men so formed and finished are the first gifts of Providence to the world. But when they have once thrown off the fear of God, which was in all ages too often the case, and the fear of man, which is now the case, and when in that state they come to understand one another and to act in corps, a more dreadful calamity cannot arise out of hell to scourge mankind. Nothing can be conceived more hard than the heart of a thoroughbred metaphysician. It comes nearer to the cold malignity of a wicked spirit than to the frailty and passion of a man. It is like that of the principle of evil himself, incorporeal, pure, unmixed, dephlegmated, defecated evil. It is no easy operation to eradicate humanity from the human breast. […] It is remarkable that they never see any way to their projected good but by the road of some evil. Their imagination is not fatigued with the contemplation of human suffering through the wild waste of centuries added to centuries of misery and desolation. Their humanity is at their horizon—and, like the horizon, it always flies before them. The geometricians and the chemists bring, the one from the dry bones of their diagrams, and the other from the soot of their furnaces, dispositions that make them worse than indifferent about those feelings and habitudes which are the supports of the moral world. Ambition is come upon them suddenly; they are intoxicated with it, and it has rendered

> them fearless of the danger which may from thence arise to others or to themselves. These philosophers consider men, in their experiments, no more than they do mice in an air pump, or in a recipient of mephitic gas.[808]

Here, Burke seems to be using terminology from scientific theories about air, which are (mostly) contemporary to him. Newly discovered gases were called airs: Boyle had experimented with an air pump and theorized about the weight of air in his *New Experiments Physico-Mechanical, Touching the Spring of the Air and its Effects* (1660); Priestley also experimented with an air pump, and published on his experiments with 'fixed air' in *Observations on Different Kinds of Air* (1772, 1774, 1775, 1777).[809] Kristen Olsen describes such a pump, and elaborates on the evolution of the theories surrounding air, specifically, that it was eventually understood as a mixed compound:

> Air, for example, was discovered to be composed of several different kinds of gases (which were still often called "airs"). In 1727, Stephen Hales discovered that solids, when heated, released "fixed air". He collected the released gas by feeding it into an upside-down vessel filled with water. The gas ran into the vessel, displacing the heavier water, and rising to the top of the vessel. This technique was later refined by William Brownrigg, who devised a simple "pneumatic trough" that allowed gases to be moved from one flask to another, by Cavendish, who displaced mercury instead of water, to solve the problem of some gases being water soluble; and by French chemist Antoine-Laurent Lavoisier, who

[808] Burke, *Letter to a Noble*, *Writings*, IX, p. 176–77.
[809] Joseph Priestley, *Experiments and Observations in Different Kinds of Air*, 2 vols (London: Johnson, 1775), II, p. 65.

> constructed his own highly accurate gasometer. […] Lavoiser became skeptical of the phlogiston theory, He concluded that the heat and light released came from the oxygen in the air, not the phlogiston in the metal. In 1785 he launched an all-out attack on phlogiston itself […] Within about ten years most prominent British scientists had rejected the phlogiston theory. Chief among the diehard phlogistonists was Priestley, who would hold to the discredited theory all his life.[810]

Early seventeenth-century chemists such as Joseph Black believed that air was just one substance; Priestley later criticised the work of his predecessors, understanding that air was 'procured from various substances'.[811] There was a rise in scientific efforts to try to understand how and why matter transformed (e.g. liquids into gas). Michael T. Walton describes 'growing popularity of atomism'.[812] Part of the attempts to understand the nature and function of atoms was to wonder how or whether they transformed; Robert Boyle re-interpreted J.B. Helmont's theories, which suggested that plants transformed water into ethereal ferments, to include the notion of atoms:

> He [Boyle] believed that the seminal principles, a concept not unrelated to the ferments of Helmont, in plants drew atoms from water and recombined them to form the substance of plants. Boyle felt that the process of drawing atoms from fluid media like water and from the air not only

[810] Kristen Olsen, *Daily Life in 18th-century England*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), p. 295.
[811] Priestley, *Experiments*, II, p. 104.
[812] Michael T. Walton, 'Boyle and Newton on the Transmutation of Water and Air, from the Root of Helmont's Tree', in *Alchemy and Early Modern Chemistry: Papers from Ambix*, ed. by Allen G. Debus, (Southport, UK: Jeremy Mills Publishing, 2004), pp. 477–84, (p. 477).

> explained the growth of plants but also the respiration of animals and the formation of minerals.[813]

Therefore, the understanding of airs, vapours, gases, ethereal ferments was beginning to include the notion of atoms, or small particles. Maurice Crosland writes, 'The only known poisons [in the eighteenth century] were solids or liquids, so they explained the deaths [deaths of unknown causes, e.g., from breathing air in mines] by postulating the existence of tiny arsenical particles in the atmosphere'.[814] In other words, the eighteenth century also saw the beginnings of understanding poisonous air, or mephitic gas.

Walton also mentions that early theories on harmful air understood 'fixed', or 'phlegmatic' air as different from 'changeable' or 'dephlegmatic' air.[815] Priestley's experiments on the transformation of air are particularly relevant to Burke's references; some of his experiments on the notion of separating atoms in air (e.g., 'Considering inflammable air as air united to phlogiston') concerned his theory of phlogiston—a theory about harmful gases released upon the separation of atoms of air, or the combustion of air.[816] Priestley experimented on the use of the 'spirit of nitre', and the production of 'nitrous air'—nitre being a form of potassium nitrate, or producing a sulphuric, noxious gas, 'the catalytic mixture of nitrates or nitrogen oxides used or produced during the manufacture of sulphuric acid'.[817] He dissolved vegetable and animal matter into nitre, among other experiments, to postulate on the process by which

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[813] *Ibid.*, p. 477.
[814] Maurice Crosland, 'Conceptual Problems in the Understanding of Gases in the Pre-Lavoisier Era', in *Instruments and Experimentation in the History of Chemistry*, ed. by Frederic L. Holmes and Trevor H. Levere, (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2000), pp. 79–105, (p. 90).
[815] Walton, p. 477.
[816] Priestley, *Experiments*, vol. II, p. 65; 'a hypothetical substance formerly supposed to exist in combination in all combustible bodies, and to be released in the process of combustion', Oxford English Dictionary, 'phlogiston' <http://www.oed.com/>, [September 4th, 2012].
[817] *Ibid.*, p. 95; Oxford English Dictionary, 'nitre', <http://www.oed.com/>, [November 12th, 2012].

mephitic air is produced: 'the more phlogiston there is in the substances moistened with the spirit of nitre, the more certain it is that the produce will be nitrous air […]'.[818]

We will see in the next passage from Burke his references to nitre, but this historical framework of atoms and air helps to interpret the potency of what Burke is actually writing in the passage above. Burke suggests that intoxicating vapour of the metaphysician is evil and just as harmful as the mephitic gas emitted from the air pump of his contemporary chemists (e.g., Priestley). His use of the term 'thoroughbred metaphysician' is appropriate to describe the sort of scientific thinking he opposes—the sort of experimentation that is not wholly understood to be flawless, or universally sanctioned by other thinkers. Burke describes the 'gas' of the metaphysician as evil: it is changed, or dephlegmaticated into a toxic substance, 'defecated evil'. In the context of Priestley's transformation of air into a harmful or combustible substance, we can understand Burke's reference as being conceptually critical of thinking that would promote division and disintegration, rather than unity:

> They consider mortar as a very anti-revolutionary invention in its present state, but, properly employed, an admirable material for overturning all establishments. They have calculated what quantity of matter convertible into niter is to be found in Bedford House, in Woburn Abbey, and in what his Grace and his trustees have still suffered to stand of that foolish royalist Inigo Jones, in Covent Garden. Churches, playhouses, coffeehouses, all alike are destined to be add mingled and equalized and blended into one common rubbish; and well-sifted and lixiviated to

[818] *Ibid.,* p. 95.

> crystallize into true, democratic, explosive, insurrectionary nitre [potassium nitrate].[819]

Burke goes on to list Priestley among the chemists who seek to conceptually extract the atom of humanity from the human breast, and transform solid established matter into explosive, destructive matter:

> While these experiments are going on upon the Duke of Bedford's houses by the Morveaux and Priestleys, the Sieyès and the rest of the analytical legislators and constitution-venders are quite as busy in their trade of decomposing organization, in forming his Grace's vassals into primary assemblies, national guards, first, second and third requisitioners, committees of research, conductors of the travelling guillotine, judges of revolutionary tribunals, legislative hangmen, supervisors of domiciliary visitation, exactors of forced loans, and assessors of the maximum.[820]

These constitutional chemists, according to Burke, seek to lixiviate, or disintegrate establishments. The notion of lixiviation is an early chemistry term: 'the action or process of separating a soluble substance from one that is insoluble'.[821] Historically, we now understand eighteenth-century developments in the scientific apprehension of matter: that it was comprised of separate atoms, that scientists such as Boyle and Priestley were understanding how these atoms could be lixiviated (or separated, or disintegrated) to result in explosive (or mephitic, or phlogistic, or poisonous) gases. Through chemical science metaphors above, Burke rails against practices that would (like new chemistry)

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[819] Burke, *Letter to a Noble*, in *Writings*, IX, p. 178.
[820] *Ibid.*, p. 179.
[821] Oxford English Dictionary, 'lixiviation' <http://www.oed.com/>, [September 4th, 2012].

separate and disintegrate. I argue that within Burke's reproach, above, to this new disintegrative sect, is a conceptual argument in favour of cohesion, mixing, keeping together, which I believe we will be able to understand further through theories of modernity, which apply alchemy as a metaphor for understanding the evolution of global religious cultures in modernization. The first way in which I suggest we can see a resonance with alchemic theories of modernity is in Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord*, through his reference above to an 'atom of' himself.[822]

An 'Atom of me': How Burke's use of scientific metaphor resonates with modern theories on religion

In his *Letter to a Noble Lord*, Burke offers some forgiveness to the Duke of Bedford for attacking him and his pension: 'In one thing I can excuse the Duke of Bedford for this attack upon me and my mortuary pension, he cannot readily comprehend the transaction he condemns'.[823] Burke explains the possibility that the Duke of Bedford did not appreciate the pension as a reward for a servant of the public, and as a measure of comfort to his posterity. However, Burke is sure to clarify that the servant of the public (himself) is a helpless old man, also that his would-be posterity (his son) is now dead. Therefore, the forgiveness below is rather more condemning than pardoning—highlighting the fact that the Duke of Bedford is attacking an old man, who has lost his son:

> Had it pleased God to continue to me the hopes of succession, I should have been, according to my mediocrity and the mediocrity of the age I live in, a sort of founder of a family: I should have left a son, who, in all the

[822] Burke, *Letter to a Noble*, in *Writings*, IX, p. 147.
[823] *Ibid.*, p. 148.

> points in which personal merit can be viewed, in science, in erudition, in genius, in taste, in honour, in generosity, in humanity, in every liberal sentiment, and every liberal accomplishment, would not have shown himself inferior to the Duke of Bedford, or to any of those whom he traces in his line. His Grace very soon would have wanted all plausibility in his attack upon that provision which belonged more to mine than to me. He would soon have supplied every deficiency, and symmetrized every disproportion. It would not have been for that successor to resort to any stagnant wasting reservoir of merit in me, or in any ancestry. He had in himself a salient, living spring of generous and manly action. Every day he lived he would have repurchased the bounty of the Crown, and ten times more, if ten times more he had received. He was made a public creature; and had no enjoyment whatever but in the performance of some duty. At this exigent moment, the loss of a finished man is not easily supplied.[824]

Burke explains that his duly proportioned, and not extravagant, pension would really have been for his progeny—his son. We could take the description of his son as a 'finished man' to mean, the loss of a 'finished' man (as in 'dead' man, or a life cut short), or the loss of a 'finished' (as in a 'polished' or 'perfect' man). Perhaps, we can construe Burke's description of his son as a perfect man, who would have served the monarchy, and whose life (if left to finish) would have been judged meritorious, even as 'viewed, in science'. In the above passage, we perceive a faint image of Burke as a parent, lamenting the premature death of his progeny. I argue that this image of Burke as a parent is the first

[824] *Ibid.,* p. 170.

way in which we see how his thinking resonates with theories of modernity, which use alchemy to describe religion. Mark C. Taylor uses alchemy to describe the vicissitude of religions in modernization; he describes alchemy through the concept of procreation or parenthood:

> Alchemy is, of course, the magico-religious practice intended to transform base metals into gold. Closely related to different strands of medieval Jewish and Christian mysticism and extremely important for the rise of modern science, alchemy originates in ancient rituals associated with mining and metallurgy. […] Minerals are believed to be embryos that grow within the womb of Mother Earth. Gestation is a process of purification in which all minerals, given enough time, will eventually turn into gold. […] the process of transformation that the metallurgist seeks to speed up presupposes that all substances are variations of an original Ur-substance. Fire burns away polluting differences and returns the many to the one in which they all originate.[825]

In this way, we can understand procreation, or parenthood as a kind of alchemy—generating newness of life, originated from a common element. However, of course, we cannot conceive of Burke as a maternal figure (gestating an embryo, as Taylor describes above). Yet, beyond Taylor's description of alchemy in procreative terms, we can apply his metaphor to the way in which Burke represents global religious culture: rendering away differences between religious conceptions, and promoting the commonality shared among them. We can conceive of his arguments against separation of matter to create

[825] Taylor, pp. 39, 40.

something explosive or destructive (like Priestley's experiments and the figurative chemists of the French Revolution), as arguments in favour of a unifying alloy.[826] I argue that Burke's conceptions in the above passage, as well as in his *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (as we shall see), resonate with Taylor's use of alchemy to conceptualize religion. We find further resonance with Taylor's conceptualization in an earlier speech, given before his *Letter to a Noble Lord*—his *Speech on the Reform of the Representation of the Commons in Parliament*, (May 7, 1782). In the speech, he intermingles metaphors that resonate with alchemy and parent and child connection:

> I look with filial reverence on the Constitution of my country, and never will cut it in pieces, and put it into the kettle of any magician, in order to boil it, with the puddle of their compounds, into youth and vigour. On the contrary, I will drive away such pretenders; I will nurse its venerable age, and with lenient arts extend a parent's breath.[827]

In his *Reflections*, Burke also writes about the disregard for constitutional establishment, insinuating that the manner in which the National Assembly disassembled and liquidated established church property was like 'children of their country who are prompt rashly to hack that aged parents in pieces, and put him into the kettle of magicians, in hopes that by their poisonous weeds, and wild incantations, they may regenerate the paternal constitution, and renovate their father's life'.[828] The constitutional matter of his country is

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[826] Taylor explains the attraction alchemy held for Romantic scientists: 'Novalis, Setffens, von Humboldt, Baader, and Schubert studied at a mining school in Freiberg, Taylor, p. 41; Mircea Eliade's, *The Forge and the Crucible: The Origins and Structures of Alchemy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) provides a historical survey of alchemy.

[827] Edmund Burke, *Speech on the Reform of the Representation of the Commons in Parliament*, (May 7, 1782), in *Edmund Burke, Selected Writings and Speeches*, ed. by Peter J. Stanlis, (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1963), pp. 395–406, (p. 404).

[828] Burke, *Reflections*, in *Writings*, IV, p. 146.

not to be separated and converted into something destructive (like the matter in Priestley's experiments). While the behaviour of a child may be rash and destructive, the breath of a parent is nurturing and cohering. I believe that this resonates with Burke's lamenting defence of his pension above: he can no longer extend a parent's breath to his own progeny (his son), but he can still nurse a veritable constitutional progeny. In his *Speech on Representation* Burke vows to nurse the perpetuity of the constitution (which, as we know from earlier writings, and as mentioned above, is fostered by a capacity for change): 'A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation'.[829]

This procreative, or parent, theme can reveal yet more about the importance Burke places on change and transformation. When Boulton interprets Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord*, he argues: 'At the heart of the clearest vindications of hereditary nobility, then, lay a manifesto of the "Novus Homo"; paradoxically appropriate to an age of revolution […]'.[830] In other words, there is an argument for newness at the heart of Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord,* which is appropriate to revolution and antithetical to reactionary conservatism. I agree with Boulton's observation, but wish to expand on the term he uses: *novus homo*. Boulton, Elizabeth Lambert, Ian Crowe, Paddy Bullard, have all applied the *novus homo* phrase to Burke (borrowed from Cicero) as referring to his affinity for the industry of a self-made man.[831] Boulton finds that affinity in Burke's defence of his pension. The phrase is lifted from an incident involving Burke: William Bagot had called Burke 'a Black Jesuit, educated at St. Omer's'; Burke 'took to himself

[829] *Ibid.*, p. 72.
[830] Boulton, *Burke's Letter to a Noble Lord*, p. 701.
[831] Bullard, p. 111; Elizabeth R. Lambert, *Edmund Burke of Beaconsfield*, (Cranbury, NJ: Rosemont Publishing & Printing Co, 2003), p. 50; Crowe, *Burke: His Life and Legacy*, p. 3.

the appellation of a *Novus Homo*. He knew the envy attending that character. *Novorum Hominum Industriam odisti*; but as he knew the envy, he knew the duty of the *Novus Homo*.'[832] Boulton, and other scholars, link the phrase to Burke's understanding that people have a hatred for the industry of self-made men (which is captured in the phrase, *Novorum Hominum Industriam odist*). However, I would like to think of the *Novus Homo* phrase as not denoting a self-made man, but in a sense that is closer to the literal translation: a 'new man'. In that sense, the passage above concerning Burke's son, from his *Letter to a Noble Lord*, can be read differently. We can interpret the concept of parenthood, or procreation, as an act in rendering a *novus homo*: in one sense, procreation is the atom(s) of a man transformed into a *new* person (a child). Above, when Burke refers to his critics being apprehensive of 'an atom' of him remaining, he is (as explained above) criticising the new scientific sect, who thinks of things in terms of atoms; however, I argue that he could also be referring to his son: some transformed version of his self ('an atom of me') would have survived with his son.[833]

Burke's religious conception that is most resonant with Taylor's alchemistic description of modern world religions is in his *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*. The *Letters on a Regicide Peace* are heavily concerned with what Burke considers a war between religion and irreligion. In his *First Letter*, Burke writes that the cause for times of peace that occur between times of war must be a transcultural religious toleration:

> The cause must be sought in the similitude throughout Europe of religion, laws, and manners. At the bottom, these are all the same. The writers in

[832] William Burke to Richard Shakelton, *The Correspondence of Edmund Burke*, ed. by L.S. Sutherland, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), II, p. 128.
[833] Burke, *Letter to a Noble*, *Writings*, IX, p. 147.

> public law have often called this *aggregate* of nations a Commonwealth. They had reason. It is virtually one great state having the same basis of general law; with some diversity of provincial customs and local establishments. The nations of Europe have had the very same Christian religion, agreeing in the fundamental parts, varying a little in the ceremonies and in the subordinate doctrines. The whole of the polity and oeconomy of every country in Europe has been derived from the same sources. […] From all those sources arose a system of manners and of education which was nearly similar in all this quarter of the globe; and which softened, blended and harmonized the colours of the whole.[834]

Being, of course, interested in the events in France, the above passage is restricted to the representation of European (and therefore, Christ-centred) religions. A peaceful and strong commonwealth is owing to an 'aggregate' of customs and manners, including religions—an 'aggregate' being 'a complex whole, mass, or body formed by the union of numerous units or particles'.[835] We can interpret Burke describing religions as unified particles, like the operations of alchemy (as opposed to the dividing, disintegrating, exploding, operations of chemists such as the French *philosophes* and Priestley). Moreover, Burke explains that these differing manners and religions are elementally the same, conceivably drawn from the same source of sacredness. This is very like Taylor's use of alchemy (above) to describe religion in modernity: alchemy 'returns the many to

[834] Burke, *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*, *Writings*, IX, p. 248.
[835] The italicization of the word 'aggregate' is Burke's; Oxford English Dictionary, 'aggregate' <http://www.oed.com/>, [September 10th, 2012].

the one in which they all originate'.[836] The commonwealth ends up being a compound of aggregated religious practices, an alloy of sacredness. I argue that this is the way in which Burke's representation of religion(s) resonates with alchemy: differing colours of religious sects blend; above, blending Christian sects, but in previous writings, blending Christian and non-Christian sects.[837]

When we consider Burke's confrontation with science in relation to how he conceptualizes religion, I argue against Schaffer and Stanlis—that Burke is not simply a 'servant of the *ancien régime*', opposed to change and science.[838] I argue that a closer look at his *Letters on a Regicide Peace* will show that they do not communicate a reactionary, *ancien régime*, opposition to science, but rather an opposition to the misuse of science, or the misuse of scientific reason.

Burke's *Letters on a Regicide Peace*; opposition to the hubris of experimental thinking

While there is not the substantial use of chemistry metaphor in the *Letters*, Burke does continue to argue the subversiveness of the French *philosophes* through medical metaphors. Especially in the *Fourth Letter* (really the first, chronologically), Burke writes of the destruction of the Church and religion in France as if it were the misuse of medical science. Therefore, I do not think that we should see this as an opposition to science as a whole; but rather an adherence to classical pathology in his admonition against the misuse of new science, and unbridled scientific reason. In the *Fourth Letter* (the first one,

[836] Taylor, p. 39, 40.
[837] When he blends distinguishing features between Christian, and non-Christian sects in *The Launching of the Hastings Impeachment*, *Writings*, VI, pp. 346, 350, 351, 361, as discussed in O'Connell, pp. 146-7, and when he writes of equal civil liberties for Christian and non-Christian sects in *Letter to William Burgh*, in *Correspondence*, II, p. 18, as discussed in O'Connell, pp. 165-66.
[838] Schaffer, 'Genius', p. 82; Stanlis, pp. 114–15.

to Fitzwilliam), Burke speculates on the growth of the Jacobin faction in England, he refers to it as a school of atheism doling out its own medicine:

> What fills the measure of horror is, that schools of Atheism are set up at the publick charge in every part of the country. That some English parents will be wicked enough to send their children to such schools there is no doubt. Better this Island should be sunk to the bottom of the sea, than that (so far as human infirmity admits) it should not be a country of Religion and Morals.[839]

In the same letter, Burke later continues the description of this dissemination of Atheism through the use of medical science metaphor:

> Among other miserable remedies that have been found in the *materia medica* [medicine] of the old college, a change of Ministry will be proposed […].[840]

The same concept (schools of atheism poisoning humankind with blasphemous medicine) is seen in the *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*:

> […W]hen schools and seminaries are erected to public expence to poison mankind from generation to generation, with the horrible maxims of this impiety;—when wearied out with incessant martyrdom, and the cries of a people hungering and thirsting for religion, they permit it, only as a tolerated evil—I call this *Atheism by establishment*.[841]

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[839] Burke, *Fourth Letter on Regicide Peace*, *Writings*, IX, p. 115.
[840] *Ibid.*, p. 117.
[841] Burke, *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*, *Writings*, IX, pp. 241–42.

He refers to Rousseau and Voltaire as 'monsters', and to the National Assembly as 'the Synagogue of Anti-Christ'.[842] Burke's attack on atheism in his *Second Letter on a Regicide Peace* renders away the qualitied between Christian and non-Christian sects, and then religious and non-religious thinking—arguing that the real destructive issue is fanatical zeal (not necessarily having to do with religion):

> They had rather domineer in a parish of Atheists, than rule over a Christian world. Their temporal ambition was wholly subservient to their proselytising spirit, in which they were not exceeded by Mahomet himself. They who have made but superficial studies in the Natural History of the human mind, have been taught to look on religious opinions as the only cause of enthusiastick zeal, and sectarian propagation. But there is no doctrine whatever, on which men can war, that is not capable of the very same effect.[843]

Burke means to admonish the French for vitiating their Christian Church. The atheists who perpetrated this vitiation proselytised with enthusiastic zeal equal to 'Mahomet himself'—the Muslim prophet. Then, argues that every doctrine is capable of that same zealous proselytisation; this erodes doctrinal difference, arguing that all men (regardless of religious sect) are capable of this atheistic zeal. I think Burke's argument is against unbridled reason, more than science (or even atheism) itself. The calculators of government over-reasoned their way right out of reason, as Burke writes, 'The calculators compute them out of their senses'.[844] Joseph Milner, a central figure in the English

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[842] *Ibid.*, pp. 241, 243.
[843] Burke, *Second Letter on a Regicide Peace*, *Writings*, IX, p. 278.
[844] *Ibid.*, p. 267.

Evangelical movement, similarly described 'the spirit of the age' as one of 'reasoning to excess'.[845]

Translating Burke's religious representation through theories of modernity

Welsh and Fidler argue that Burke's thinking on culture displays an opposition to transnational, or transcultural thinking—evincing this in his doubts about unifying nations through economic methods (e.g., commoditization and consumerism):

> Will globalization lay the groundwork for the deep, transcultural solidarism that states and governmental organizations had found so difficult to create? Burke's thinking on culture suggests a negative answer to this question. Although Burke stressed the social context of economic activity, his sensitivity to cultural differences in connection with economic intercourse suggests that he saw limits to the "community building" potential of commerce. To produce "obligations written on the heart" on a truly global scale will require more than inculcating non-Western peoples with consumerism.[846]

While I understand what Welsh and Fidler explain (that simply turning on non-Western peoples to Western style consumerism will not achieve the transcultural solidarism), I argue against their assessment of Burke: that his thinking surrounding religion evinces a positive answer (not a negative answer, but a certain hope) for transcultural solidarism. In his *First Letter*, we saw how Burke described a Commonwealth community that

[845] Joseph Milner, 'Scriptural Proof of the Influence of the Holy Spirit on the Understanding', in *Essays On Several Religious Subjects* (London: Ward and Peacock, 1789), pp. 53–94, (p. 54).
[846] Welsh and Fidler, p. 66.

transcended nations and manners, achieved through an aggregate of religion.[847] Therefore, in terms of imagining transnational communities, while there may be (as Welsh and Fidler suggest) economic limitations in Burke's thinking, I believe that Burke's representation of religious cultures indicates that transnational, transreligious, community is possible. I argue that we can articulate Burke's expanded, transnational representation of religious culture through twentieth and twenty-first century theorists of religion. For example, Susanne Hoeber Rudolph argues that the conservation and expansion of religion across nations and cultural extinction is, indeed, owing to modernity:

> Modern social science did not warn us that this would happen. Instead it asserted that religion would fade, then disappear, with the triumph of science and rationalism, But religion has expanded explosively, stimulated as much by secular global processes—migration, multinational capital, […] as by proselytizing activity. Contrary to expectations, its expansion has been an answer to and driven by modernity. In response to the deracination and threats of cultural extinction associated with modernization processes, religious experience seeks to restore meaning to life.[848]

In the excerpts from his *Letter to a Noble Lord* and his *Letters on a Regicide Peace* above, we see Burke's fear that the 'scientific' practices of the new sect of thinking—the kind of scientific thinking resulting in explosive harmful gases (literally, from Priestley's experiments, and otherwise from the National Assembly) would deracinate religion(s).

[847] Burke, *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*, *Writings*, IX, p. 248.
[848] Hoeber Rudolph, 'Introduction Religion, States', p. 1.

I argue that Burke's representation of global religions in his writings and speeches transcends boundaries between nations and sects, and is, therefore, modern—like Berman's modernity, it transcends 'all boundaries of geography, ethnicity, of class and nationality'.[849] Daniéle Hervieu-Léger captures the modern transnational conceptualization of religion: '"Transnational religion" refers to any religious system whose organization transcends frontiers and weaves over and above national political and cultural specificities […]'.[850] In Burke's *First Letter*, above, we can construe his representation of religions as transcending cultural specificities—claiming they are all the same 'at the bottom', and come from 'the same source'.

Taylor, Hoeber Rudolph, and Hervieu-Léger essentially describe the same thing: that the transformative nature of religion is the method by which it is conserved. I believe this describes some of the ways in which religion is represented in Burke's literature. Taylor describes the way in which alchemy lives on through the perpetual reconceptualization of religion, as it transforms throughout modernity. For example, when different religions consider the apocalypse, and must keep deferring 'the end' when it does not come, it is a reconceptualization of faith (the creation of a new faith, in the way alchemy is the creation of a new metal): 'The ancient dream of the alchemist is far from over. […] Far from destroying faith, infinite deferral [of the apocalypse] creates the distance that creates the time and space for faithful vision.'[851] Expanding the representation of religions to include an aggregate of differing sects conceptually is creating a new alloy of faith(s).

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[849] Marshall Berman, p. 15.
[850] Daniéle Hervieu-Léger, 'Faces of Catholic Transnationalism: In and Beyond France', in *Transnational Religions and Fading States*, *Ibid.*, pp. 104–20, (p. 104).
[851] Taylor, p. 52, 53.

The capacity for transformative thinking about religion is key for its conservation through modernization. For example, Berman writes of the transformation of God into commoditization in modernity, arguing that modern nihilism sees science (along with the rise of rationalism and an obsoleted God) as responsible for transforming of the old forms of honour and dignity:

> Old modes of honor and dignity do not die; instead, they get incorporated into the market, take on price tags, gain new life as commodities. Thus, any imaginable mode of human conduct becomes morally permissible the moment it becomes economically possible, becomes "valuable"; anything goes if it pays. This is what modern nihilism is all about, Dostoevsky, Nietzsche and their twentieth-century successors will ascribe this predicament to science, rationalism, the death of God.[852]

In this sense, we can understand that religion is not necessarily vitiated by science (as Hoeber Rudolph suggests), God is not necessarily dead; modernity simply transforms these concepts into a new substance—for example, God transforms into something like a commodity. The rise of rationalistic, scientific thought did not 'vitiate' religion as Burke feared in his *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*, or 'lixiviate' it into an harmful 'niter' as he feared in his *Letter to a Noble Lord*; the rise in this new sect of thinking only forced the transformation of old modes of religion into new ones—closer to an aggregate of faiths. In this way, Burke's late writings prefigure Berman's description above. Reaching back to his *Enquiry*, we see Burke removing the necessity of God from the perception of the sublime sacred: Burke's version of the sublime is highly subjective, unmitigated by a

[852] Marshall Berman, p. 111.

disinterested object (God), the Godhead is viewed as a theoretical example, and almost unnecessary.[853] This prefigures the evolution of religion through modernity that Paul Heelas describes:

> Even though God might remain the ultimate author, when religion is functioning beyond the church and chapel the authority of God—as exercised through the institutionalized—is obviously diminished. […] But the more that people come to treat religion as a consumer item, the less likely they are to be attracted to the "real" thing.[854]

The expansion of economic and political communities to transcend boundaries between nations, forces the expansion of the conceptual representation of religions. Hoeber Rudolph explains that the result of eighteenth-century imperial modernization is an intellectual and cultural aggregate: 'an aggregative intellectual and social process of ecumenization, reaching across civilizational and state borders and engaging the full diversity of world religions.'[855] Hoeber Rudolph continues:

> In the age of imperialism, western religions migrated with the flag in ways that seems to herald the universalization of Christian hegemony in the parts of Africa and Asia that were annexed to empires […].[856]

Burke's description of a religious European aggregate above in his *First Letter* prefigures Hoeber Rudolph's assessment above.

Conclusion to Chapter 4

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[853] O'Connell, pp. 109-21.
[854] Heelas, p. 16.
[855] Hoeber Rudolph, 'Religious Concomitants of Transnationalism', p. 141.
[856] *Ibid.*, p. 142.

I believe that the above critical analysis has made a much-needed contribution to a conversation about Burke's confrontation with science. Beyond considering the rhetorical or political facets of his *Letter to a Noble Lord* and his *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, (as Boulton and Browne do) I have filled a need to consider the scientific and religious contexts of those texts. While I have acknowledged the problems inherent in interpreting Burke in a scientific context, I believe I have demonstrated the value in examining Burke's confrontation with science: science does not need to be completely incompatible with Burke's thinking (as Stanlis suggests regarding Burke's political thinking), nor is it captured entirely by metaphysics (as Pappin suggests of Burke's political thinking). However, using theories of modernity, particularly Mark C. Taylor, reveals a dimension of his religious thought wherein the boundaries between religious sects are rendered familiar.

I have explained some of the scientific context behind the references in his *Letter to a Noble Lord*, and have further demonstrated how Burke's application of scientific terms allowed him to communicate his worry about the vitiation of religious establishment. I further argued the way these characteristics, especially in his *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*, revealed his progressive, transcendent representation of global religion(s). I then argued that his *Letters* do not communicate an opposition to science, but rather an opposition to the misuse of science, or the use of disintegrative thinking. I believe I have demonstrated the ways in which Burke's representation of global religions prefigures twentieth and twenty-first century conceptualizations of religion: Burke's representation of religious culture observed a transcendence of boundaries between nation, culture, and sect, before Hoeber Rudolph, Hervieu-Léger, and Berman. Like

Grotius, Burke conceived of a Godless sacredness before theorists of modernity, like Heelas. I believe that the inclusion of Burke in modern transnational thinking (from Welsh and Fidler) evidences what no one has yet claimed: Burke influenced contemporary transnational thinking about religion. I ultimately argue that we can qualify Burke's representation of religion(s) in his writings and speeches as expanded, transcendent, progressive, and modern—not simply conservative-reactionary, or (as Schaffer suggests) serving the *ancien régime*.

Conclusion

I believe that my thesis has proven the critical value in interpreting Edmund Burke's religious thinking in terms of its analytical footprint left behind, beyond his own religious identity. The way that Roland Barthes and Stanley E. Fish think about texts, and their value, further justifies my theoretical approach. Barthes writes:

> Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negative where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing. […] As soon as a fact is narrated no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intransitively, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins.[857]

The function, the value, of a text lies within the text itself. The identity of the author is, in some sense, lost in the operation of this function.

In Burke's case (while we must not dismiss his identity entirely) focusing too much on solving his true identity (religious, or otherwise), perhaps yields more problems than it solves. This points to what Stanley E. Fish writes about disputes over the poems of John Milton; he makes a case for reader response theory:

> In short, these are problems that apparently cannot be solved, at least not by the methods traditionally brought to bear on them. What I would like to argue is that they are not meant to be solved but to be experienced (they

[857] Roland Barthes, 'The Death of the Author', in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), pp. 1466–69, (p. 1466).

> signify), and that consequently any procedure that attempts to determine which of a number of readings is correct will necessarily fail.[858]

To try to determine which interpretation of Burke is all encompassing and correct (e.g., Anglican, Latitudinarian, Metaphysician, Catholic) is counterintuitive to the signifying experience of his texts. For a historian or a biographer, perhaps an ultimate determination would be valuable; however, for a literary interpretation (like mine), I agree with Fish—that deciding which of a number of Burke interpretations is correct distracts from the experience of the texts, as it is impressed upon a reader. Of course, Fish's case for the reader response approach presents a problem:

> […] analyses generated by the assumption that meaning is embedded in the artefact—will always point in as many directions as there are interpreters; that is, not only will it prove something, it will prove anything.[859]

However, I believe that the many directions to be yielded from Burke's work are what (to use Stephen K. White's phrase) makes it 'perennially attractive'.[860] I believe that the impression of the artefact (the text) on the reader is appropriate for Burke, who favours empirical aesthetic experience, as we discussed in Chapter 1 of this thesis. Barthes refers to linguistics to approximate the function of a text once it is impressed upon a reader:

> Leaving aside literature itself (such distinctions really becoming invalid), linguistics has recently provided the destruction of the Author with a valuable analytical tool by showing that the whole of the enunciation is an

[858] Stanley E. Fish, 'Interpreting the Variorum', in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, ed. by Vincent B. Leitch, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), pp. 2071–88, (p. 2072).
[859] Fish, p. 2073.
[860] White, p. 2.

> empty functioning perfectly without there being any need for it to be filled with the person of the interlocutors. Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing […].[861]

The conceptual destruction (or death) of an author conveys a low level of relevance with regard to the actual experience of the text. So, like Conor Cruise O'Brien did, we can speculate about how Burke received Catholic last rites while on his deathbed, but I believe that I have proven that it is more important to understand another part of O'Brien's observation: that Burke 'believed in those large parts of Christianity that were common to Anglicanism and Roman Catholicism, and did not concern himself with those doctrinal parts which divided them.'[862] I believe I have expanded on this observation by showing that the imprint of Burke's representation of religion left behind in his literature shows a conception of religion that not only (as O'Brien suggests) transcends doctrinal difference between Anglicanism and Catholicism, but also blends difference between Christian, non-Christian religions, Christian heterodoxy, non-god-centred thinking, and even the holy and the profane.

I have attempted to honour the work of those who skilfully identify Burke's Anglican Latitudinarianism (Frederick Dryer, J.C.D. Clark, Brian Young, Elizabeth Lambert, F.P. Lock and others) by highlighting the ways in which his representation of various religious doctrines reaches beyond the Latitudinarian toleration measures of his day: his *oeuvre* of literatures offers a multicultural representation of global religious doctrines as legitimate (relative to indigenous culture). By interpreting Burke as a quasi-religious thinker, the observations presented in the previous chapters have complemented

[861] Barthes, p. 1467.
[862] O'Brien, p. 590–91.

scholarship that strongly analyses Burke as a politician, a rhetorician, and an aesthetician (Richard Bourke, Terry Eagleton, Paddy Bullard, Stephen K. White, etc.). By analysing Burke beyond the speculative scope of his own religious cultural identity, I have complemented the work of those who have offered expert interpretations of Burke's own religious subscription (e.g., Conor Cruise O'Brien, Thomas H.D. Mahoney, Eamonn O'Flaherty, Dreyer, Crowe, and Lock).

I introduced my thesis by seating Burke's writings and speeches in the context of eighteenth-century modernity, and the understanding of ancient versus modern from Enlightenment minds (such as David Hume) described by J.G.A. Pocock—a 'post-feudal and post-ecclesiastical modernity'.[863] I introduced a framework of eighteenth-century Anglican culture, through the work of Knud Haakonssen and Brian Young, further fortifying my analysis of eighteenth-century modernity.[864] Bruno Latour and S.J. Barnett also describe a modernity emerging out of the Reformation, marked by a rise in scientific enquiry and freethinking, reinvigorated in the eighteenth century; I further seated my analysis in their scholarship.[865] I explained my objective to enrich our understanding of Burke in the context of modernity by demonstrating how theories of recent modernity function within parameters and themes comparable to the eighteenth-century condition described by Pocock, Latour, and Barnett.

In Chapter 1, I showed how Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry Into Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) and his *A Vindication of Natural Society* (1756–57) engage with themes subversive to Established Christianity: Christian heterodoxy, Deism, non-

[863] Hume, *Essays Moral, Political and Literary*, p. 361; Pocock, II, p. 264.
[864] Haakonssen, p. 2; Young, p. 11, 19.
[865] Barnett, p. 38.; Latour, p. 42-3.

god-centred thinking, and even themes not associated with holiness (i.e. the profane). I demonstrated how the vocabulary of theorists of modernity articulate such paradoxical complexity. Theorists including Marshall Berman, Terry Eagleton, Paul Heelas, Phillip Blond, and John Milbank explain such paradoxical complexity, wherein the rhetoric of arguments in support of religion may be dependent on themes antithetical to religion, and the rise in Christian-heterodox thinking encourages expanding the notion of the sublime, until the deity-object is obsolete. By placing these early texts in this context of modernity, I demonstrated how Burke's representation of religion(s) began to render religious doctrine and determinacy less distinct. This, I believe, shaped an interpretation of Burke as an originator of modern religious understanding, which also contributed to arguing against interpretations of Burke as a reactionary.

In Chapter 2, I demonstrated the way in which, in Burke's writings concerning India and Ireland (from the 1770s and 1780s), his representation of religion became even more expanded—to use Frederick G. Whelan's phrasing again, 'rendering essential features familiar' while retaining cultural quality. His anti-exclusionary representation of indigenous religions treated Hindu, Muslim, Catholic, Jewish, and even Pagan religions with a legitimacy relative to their culture. Referencing the work of Isabel Rivers, I highlighted this inclusive religious conception as multicultural, more modern than the measure of toleration for his day.[866] I demonstrated the way in which Burke's representation of global religions prefigured theories of modernity from Bauman (again), Johnathan Israel and Paul Heelas. Importantly, in my interpretation of these texts, I shaped an argument that showed how Burke's openness to religious instinct over

[866] Rivers, p. 25;

particular dogma undermines interpretations that overestimate his Catholic roots, his liberalism, or insist on categorizing him by any restricting monikers.

In my interpretation of Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), his *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* (1791) and *Thoughts on French Affairs* (1791), I proved the value in considering the religious context of those texts—specifically, how his argument(s) to preserve the sacred gives sanctuary to its opposite (the demonic, the sacrilegious). I provided some needed expansion on the observation made by the editors of the Langford edition to the text, that Burke constructed a 'diabolid'.[867] I showed how his representations of religious sacredness, in his writings surrounding the French Revolution, present a scenario wherein holiness and the profane (good and evil) are interdependent. In the *Reflections*, along with his *Letter to a Member* and his *Thoughts on French Affairs*, I outlined the theme of evil underlying Burke's alarmist rhetoric—as it is aligned with the eighteenth-century rhetorical practice of taking veritable delight in the demonizing description of one's enemy, described by S.J. Barnett and John Barrell.[868] I showed how the way in which ideas surrounding religion are represented in these texts resonates with twentieth century theories of modernity—for example, Burke's reliance on the profane to defend the sacred resonates with the modern 'profaning of the sacred', originated by Karl Marx and applied to modernism by Zygmunt Bauman.[869] Further, I argued that the impression of religious conception in these texts prefigured deconstructionist conceptualizations of religion as trans-religious, or religion

[867] Mitchell, 'Introduction to *Reflections*', *Writings*, IV, p. 8
[868] Barrell, p. 34; Barnett, p. 214.
[869] Marx and Engels, *Manifesto*, p. 8. Marshall Berman, p. 89.

without religion (from Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault).[870] I also highlighted Burke's openness to malleability and change in his religious though as evidence antithetical to reactionary-conservatism.

My analysis of Burke's late writings, *Letter to a Noble Lord* (1796) and his *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1796, 97), filled a need to understand more about the scientific references in those texts, and what they reveal about Burke's representation of religions. I demonstrated how Burke's application of scientific terms allowed him to communicate his worry about the vitiation of religious cultural establishment. I used the work of modernity theorists, particularly Mark C. Taylor, to reveal a dimension of Burke's religious thought wherein the boundaries between religious sects are fluid, and conceptually made up of the same basic element. I further argued the way in which Burke represents religions (especially in his *First Letter on a Regicide Peace*) transcends boundaries of nation, culture, and sect, which prefigures twentieth and twenty-first century representations of religion from: Susan Hoeber Rudolph and Daniéle Hervieu-Léger, and (again) Berman. I proposed that Burke conceived of a Godless sacredness before theorists of modernity, such as Paul Heelas. I believe that the inclusion of Burke in studies focused in transnational thinking (from David P. Fidler and Jennifer Welsh) evidences a classification of Burke that I have not seen elsewhere: that Burke influenced contemporary conceptions about religion.

Ultimately, my interpretation of his late writings follows the direction I laid out in my interpretation of his early writings, his writings on Ireland and India, and his writings

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[870] Jacques Derrida, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, ed. by John D. Caputo, (USA: Fordham University Press, 1997); Michel Foucault, *Mental Illness and Psychology*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1976), p. 81; also Michel Foucault, *Religion and Culture*, ed. by Jeremy R. Carrette, (UK: Manchester University Press, 1999).

on the French Revolution: that Burke's representations of religious identities and themes is multicultural, and therefore modern—not simply conservative-reactionary, or in service of the *ancien régime*.

The impression of Burke's religious conception prefigures Hoeber Rudolph's representation of contemporary global religions, which emphasises the transcendence between cultures. Hoeber Rudolph describes non-religious-oriented communities that value an arena of belief over sectarian division:

> Religious formations have joined issue—and interest-oriented transnational epistemes and communities—human rights associations, environmentalists, public health professionals, multinationals—to constitute a transnational civil society that carries on a world politics. This society creates an arena of belief, commitment, and practice alternative to the state, draining affect and action from it without replacing it.[871]

The obligation of civil society to embrace human rights (the right to autochthonous religious culture) creates formations of multinational, transnational, broadly expanded belief. I believe this transcendent conception is comprehensively present in Burke's representations of religion(s) throughout his writing, which validates him as a contributor to the modern way in which religions are publicly represented.

[871] Hoeber Rudolph, 'Dehomogenizing Religious Formations', p. 255–56.

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